

BADIOU AND HEGEL

INFINITY,
DIALECTICS,
SUBJECTIVITY

Edited by Jim Vernon
and Antonio Calcagno

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Abbreviations for Cited Works

BE	<i>Being and Event</i> , trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005).
MP	<i>Manifesto for Philosophy</i> , trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005).
C	<i>Conditions</i> , trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008).
LW	<i>Logics of Worlds</i> , trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).
TC	<i>The Century</i> , trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Polity Press, 2007).
HI	<i>Handbook of Inaesthetics</i> , trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).
TS	<i>Theory of the Subject</i> , trans. Bruno Bosteels (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009).

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Introduction

Jim Vernon

While the work of Alain Badiou arguably represents the most novel and influential contribution to Continental philosophy of the past quarter century, as with many French, post-war thinkers, the precise nature and impact of this contribution remains difficult to assess. This does not, however, concern the traditional (usually uncharitable, often disingenuous) charge of impenetrability of style and idiosyncrasy of jargon (as, e.g., lodged so often against thinkers like Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, and Jacques Derrida). If anything, Badiou is even less susceptible to this canard than his compatriots, focused as he is on unequivocal mathematical presentation. Rather, it has to do with the inherent complexity of his thought. Simultaneously a thinker of multiplicity and of universality, of unjustified fidelity and retroactively justified truth, of material contingency and formal abstraction, Badiou offers a philosophy rife with internal tension, which therefore admits of no easy summary and readily leads to divergent interpretations. One way of gauging the complexity of his thought is by analyzing his vexed relationship to the thought of G. W. F. Hegel.

There are two basic stories one can tell about Badiou's relation to Hegel. On the one hand, Badiou can arguably be placed in the grand tradition of French anti- or, at least, post-Hegelianism.¹ Resolutely a thinker of ontological multiplicity, the contingency of events and the militant commitment of unjustified activists, Badiou can easily be read as launching the latest salvo in the long French tradition of undermining the unity of the Idea, the necessary order of historical progress and the state-governed politics of recognition generally associated with the once dominant Hegelian dialectic. From the ground up, then, Hegel and Badiou stand opposed, with the former "holding that there is a being of the One" (BE, 161) which can therefore be known by the rational subject, and the latter deciding from the outset that "the one *is not*" and thus that the being of that which "will have counted as one" for knowing subjects (BE, 23), "on the basis of not having been one, turns out to be multiple" (BE, 24). The inconsistent multiplicity of Badiou's ontology will only be intimated by surprising and indemonstrable events, which puncture a hole in mere "knowledge," no matter how absolute, with a "truth" that poten-

tially forges a new history through the unjustified actions of a few in fidelity. Thus, where Hegel unifies subject and object in a relation of knowledge that unfolds within a continuous history of increasingly rational and free states, Badiou subtracts the object from knowledge, and thus the subject from experience and reason, opening up a discontinuous field for novel and disruptive action at a distance from state control.

On the other hand, however, it is equally plausible to raise Badiou out of this tradition, and align him with Hegel against the more historicist and embodied strains of Continental philosophy. Like Hegel, Badiou rejects the analytic of finitude associated with Kant and phenomenology, while simultaneously subtracting thought from its corporeal determination. They assuredly differ as to both the nature of the infinity at issue, as well as the role played by mathematics in determining that nature, but Hegel and Badiou can be read as equally refusing to allow situational, natural or historical constraints to limit the processual unfolding of thought. Both thinkers insist on the fundamental capacity of thought to force itself beyond, or negate, all merely received determinations in politics, art, science, love and philosophy. In this sense, Badiou is certainly, as he often claims, a fundamentally *dialectical* thinker, one who, moreover, insists on retrieving the category of the thinking, active subject from the a-, post- or anti-subjective tendencies of Hegel's postmodern critics. Against the infinitely deferred promises of deconstruction, the fragmented, impersonal quest for a missing people in schizoanalysis, or the finite, embodied ego of phenomenology, Badiou follows Hegel in advocating an active, infinite subject defined by thinking and willing the actualization of an eternal, austere truth.

This tension is perhaps best exemplified by the divergent accounts of the Hegel/Badiou relation by two of the most influential Anglophone expositors of Badiou's thought: Peter Hallward and Bruno Bosteels. While both, Bosteels in particular, acknowledge the tension itself, each decides in favor of one of its horns. Hallward, for example, argues that "[h]owever violent and disruptive the process of negation might be, [Hegel] maintains a dialectical continuity between subject and object."² As such, at "all costs, Badiou must demonstrate the failure of [Hegel's] effort."³ For Hallward, Badiou must align himself against Hegel in order to preserve the disjunct between truth and knowledge, or being and subject. As he suggests, however, this may be to the detriment of Badiou's system, in that it seems to radically divorce the fundamentally infinite and subtractive thought of ontology from the necessarily situated and determined world within which it purports to produce change. Contrary to the dialectical reading, then, Hallward argues that Badiou's thought flirts with "a return to broadly Kantian dualisms, reworked in terms of the dichotomy of truth and knowledge or subject and object."⁴

By contrast, Bosteels emphasizes the extent to which Badiou is "a dialectical thinker who works in the shadow of Hegel."⁵ While acknowl-

edging that the post-Kojevean, *Phenomenology*-based reading of Hegel as a thinker of situational finitude and inter-personal recognition is readily grounded in certain texts,⁶ Bosteels finds, even in that early Hegel text “the possibility to see the first role of the subject, of spirit or the ‘I,’ not as a schoolbook example of synthesis and sublation but as the power to split reality into the real and the unreal.”⁷ That is, rather than making subject and substance continuous, or even merely opposing them without contact, Hegel can be seen as “coming to grips with the articulation of both these terms through their inherent scission.”⁸ Dialectical reason, then, would be “split from within” and “the dialectic itself comes to be defined as a logic of scission.”⁹ As such, Hegel can be read as articulating “a theory of the subject onto the fundamental crack in the ontological edifice of being” as a “doctrine of the event.”¹⁰ This dialectical logic of scission implies that truth is not the co-ordination of a subjective proposition or intention with an object, but the process of labor that emits from the eventual crack in being. This, in turn, implies a “constant passing beyond . . . the obsessive fixating of boundaries” which defines the analytic of finitude, as exemplified by Kant’s “bounds of sense.”¹¹ As such, in direct opposition to Hallward’s take, Bosteels argues that Badiou’s challenge to contemporary philosophy might be summarized as renewing the battle of “Hegel against Kant, [or] the dialectic of infinity against the analytic of finitude.”¹²

Of course, ambiguous relations with Hegel are nothing new in French philosophy. This is one reason Hegelians have traditionally been so active in responding to challenges to his thought from the Continent. Derrida,¹³ Deleuze,¹⁴ and others have occasioned serious scholarly debate between those still committed to (a version of) Hegelianism and their critics, with a consensus regarding both the nature and import of the relation in most cases yet to emerge. As yet, however, there has been a near total absence of discussion of either the validity or impact of Badiou’s thought among scholars of Hegel. This is perhaps due to the recent importation of his thought to mainstream scholarship, but it also may result from the limited discussion of either Hegel’s influence on, or challenge to, Badiou’s thought in the literature either expositing or appraising his thought.¹⁵

Consequently, we have sought to assemble a volume that is neither a Hegelian book on Badiou, nor a Badiouean book on Hegel; rather, our aim was to begin the difficult, and necessary, process of exposing the varied tensions and resonances between the two thinkers through a plurality of competing voices. The essays in the first section in general work to either clarify or defend Badiou’s varied critiques of Hegel and neo-Hegelian thought, while those in the second section offer either Hegelian rejoinders to Badiou’s critique, or raise complications for Badiou’s thought out of his relations to Hegel. While the essays here may not be conclusive, we hope that they lay a solid foundation for future scholar-

ship on the relationship between two of the most challenging, as well as two of the most vital, thinkers in the Western canon.

We begin with “Measuring Up: Some Consequences of Badiou’s Confrontation with Hegel,” in which A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens trace one version of the history of Badiou’s engagements with Hegel’s dialectic, from his earliest systematic works forward. Against the grain of many French thinkers, they argue, Badiou initiated a kind of “return to Hegel” precisely by rejecting from the outset the anthropological, *Phenomenology*-based reading of Hegel that stifled so much French thought in the post-war period. Badiou, thus, almost exclusively restricts his major engagements with Hegel to the *Science of Logic*, returning to the dialectic, but in a sense that already introduces division into the system’s synthesis. His first major work, *Theory of the Subject*, isolates a dialectics of scission operating below the levels of alienation and identity. But constitutive of and essential to Hegel’s ontological texts. By *Being and Event*, however, Badiou comes to reject the dialectical mode of thinking, for it demands, even if resting on a fundamental scission, a coherent and knowable totality. The decisive conflict, infamously, comes from the challenge of post-Cantorian mathematical infinity to Hegel’s dialectical, qualitative infinite, whose specific nature is treated extensively in some of the essays which follow. What is key, however, for Bartlett and Clemens, is that Hegel demands that infinity be a *law* of being, one which governs the dialectical self-generation of qualitatively consistent wholes. By contrast, Badiou follows modern set theorists in declaring the infinite as a *decision*, one which subtracts being from such wholes axiomatically. Having firmly rejected the Hegelian dialectic, then, it is curious that Badiou’s recent work resurrects the term “dialectic” in a new, admittedly “ideological” form. Returning neither to the *Phenomenology*’s dialectic of subject and object, nor to the Greater *Logic*’s generative dialectic of infinity, *Logics of Worlds* puts forth a new, materialist dialectic of the Whole. If, for Hegel, the whole arises from the dialectical tension at the heart of being, that is—if it is a totality of multiplicity—generated following the negative becoming of multiplicity into totality, for Badiou, developments like Russell’s paradox indicate that the inconsistency and reflection within totalized multiplicity prevent it from ever becoming self-consistent. If the term “dialectics” is retained, it may be simply to mark the need to move beyond a generative account of negation to a form of thinking both productive of, and adequate to, more varied, local and insurrectionary forms of creation.

Tzuchien Tho, in “The Good, the Bad, and the Indeterminate: Hegel and Badiou on the Dialectics of the Infinite,” focuses on the rationale for, and consequences of, Badiou’s rejection of Hegel’s dialectics of the quantitative and qualitative infinite. As is well known, Hegel critiques the merely mathematical or quantitative understanding of the infinite for its essential indeterminacy. This “bad” infinite is constructed merely by negating or surpassing an already given magnitude through the process of

addition. As such, this “infinite,” for Hegel, is merely indefinite, rather than genuinely infinite, because it is incapable of completion, or constituting a determinate totality. Hegel, thus, dialectically supplants this infinite with the “good” qualitative infinity of dynamic self-relation, or the self-sublation of the interminable process of surpassing into a determinate totality of becoming. Only through such totalization does the infinite gain determination, and thus the mere addition of quantity must pass into the determinate being of quality. Tho traces the development of mathematics in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to show that the mathematical infinite has revealed itself to, in fact, be perfectly determinable without the invocation of totality. As Dedekind, Cantor and others have shown, the indefinite can, through a series of mapping relations between orders of numbers (e.g., natural and prime), internally produce a determinate order of transfinite quantities. Thus, the infinite remains the incomplete, indefinite series of Hegel’s “bad” infinity, but does not lack determination. Totality, then, is warded off through a method of “subtracting” structural relations from qualitatively presented relata (for one could equally map natural to even, or odd, numbers with the same structural effects). As such, Badiou’s post-Cantorian rejection of the qualitative infinite has ontological implications, and, as Tho argues, largely accounts for his move to a subtractive, set-theoretic ontology. The debate about the nature of the infinite, for Tho, makes clear the stark distinction between a dialectical ontology that demands totality and consistency, and a set-theoretic ontology built from pure, inconsistent multiplicity.

Taking another angle on Badiou’s mathematical rejection of Hegel, Adriel M. Trott’s “Badiou *contra* Hegel: The Materialist Dialectic Against the Myth of the Whole” focuses on an internal critique of the Hegelian demand for totality. In Hegel, a myriad of differences can be tolerated within his system so long as they are ultimately interiorized into it. That is, difference and multiplicity are ontologically admissible only on condition that they form no genuine outside to philosophical thought, which can form into a systematic whole. Dialectical idealism, then, can be defined as the synthesis, or fusion, of differences into one. Taking up Badiou’s accounts of Russell’s paradox and Gödel’s theorem, Trott argues that it is precisely this claim to totality or completeness that results in an ontologically inadmissible inconsistency. As such, any purported or “counted” ontological whole is always haunted by that which escapes it, or is subtracted from it. The disruption of what appears to be a self-contained whole through that which intrinsically escapes such counting is precisely what Badiou terms an “event.” The event thus breaks with the order of being, splitting the purported ontological one, revealing the falseness of its totalizing count. As such, Badiou’s “dialectical materialism” counters the Hegelian fusion of difference into unity with the breaking of the One into Two. Where Hegel, then, builds a system of both increasing differentiation within, as well as increasing convergence be-

tween, the orders of ontology and phenomenology, Badiou develops an account of the truths that erupt between these orders, by way of the most minimal difference, clearing the way for genuine novelty to arise in both. Trott concludes by examining some of the political consequences of these divergent dialectics.

In the first section's final essay, "The Question of Art: Badiou and Hegel," Gabriel Riera further explicates the difference between these two forms of dialectics by taking up the problem of philosophy's relation to art. As is well known, Badiou makes art one of philosophy's four "conditions," through which evental truths emerge. Such events are subtracted from their situation, but in such a way that they can be applied to it to effect real, genuinely novel change. This new dialectic of the local and the global supplants most philosophies of art, but in particular targets Hegel's speculative dialectics, which unfolds immanently within a situation in a series of ordered, hierarchical forms and stages. After tracing some of Badiou's more general critique of Hegel, Riera raises a problem concerning this treatment of his aesthetics. Counter-intuitively, Badiou places Hegel in the "Romantic" form of thinking about art; this despite Hegel's infamous and often vitriolic condemnations of Schlegel and his fellow-travellers, and preference for the Classical Ideal. In the second half of his essay, Riera defends Badiou's claim, by arguing that Hegel and the Romantics equally treat art as a figure of knowledge. While the Romantics typically vaunted art's mode of revelation above that of philosophy, and Hegel reverses the hierarchy, they commonly consider art as an institution of ontological knowledge which subsists in the same sphere or situation as philosophy. Philosophy, for Hegel, is a more secure and revelatory discourse of knowledge, but this knowledge is not fundamentally distinct from that of art. Both art and philosophy present the reconciliation of subject and object, or of the spiritual and the sensible, as Absolute Spirit. To this "Romantic" aesthetics, Badiou militantly opposes his "in-aesthetics," defined by the immanence and singularity of truths specific to art itself. Art, then, is adamantly not an object of philosophy, for its truths are radically exterior to its co-ordinating discourse. Thus, if both thinkers assume that artistic truth is essential to philosophy, Hegel subordinates it to conceptual thinking in a historical hierarchy, while Badiou punctuates all historicisms and hierarchies with illegal, singular and consequential artistic events.

Opening the volume's second part, Frank Ruda's "Badiou with Hegel: Preliminary Remarks on A(ny) Contemporary Reading of Hegel" seeks to rehabilitate Hegel as a kind of complement to Badiou, rather than as an enemy. Ruda traces the historical trajectory of Badiou's critique of Hegel's conception of dialectics from his early writings to *Logics of Worlds*, which curiously follows (albeit not without interruption and significant omission) the course of Hegel's *Greater Logic*. Throughout and consistently, Badiou faults his predecessor for replacing multiplicity with iden-

tity. In the opening of the *Logic*, for example, Hegel begins with the category of being, while simultaneously acknowledging that being's very lack of determination implies the positing of it as nothing. Thus, he opens with two terms which are neither distinguished (for being "is" nothing) nor identical (there is being *and* nothing). While the One of being splits into the two of being and nothing, this two is only posited as the movement of One series (it is being, then its transformation into nothing). The *Logic*, then, is essentially a movement of the same; while there is change, it is basically identical from iteration to iteration. Ruda traces this critique through the dialectics of determinate being, as well as quantity and quality in order to grasp the fundamental conflict between their philosophies, according to Badiou: Hegel's ontology is "objective" and "generative," in that it links the appearance of being to a law which determines the single and only form of being's appearance, while Badiou's ontology is "subjective" and "subtractive," linking being's appearance to a lawless form of decision that allows for multiple appearances of being. In his conclusion, however, Ruda argues that this difference rests upon the presumption that the *Science of Logic* is a treatise on the law of being and its consequences, rather than a depiction of the trajectory of thought. Ruda reminds us Hegel precedes the dialectic of being and nothing by claiming that thought can only begin with the subjective *decision to begin*. This decision, underived from any previous content, must therefore be both immediate and indeterminate; it is the decision to decide to begin, and to rigorously determine the consequences of that unjustified beginning. So conceived, Hegel's masterwork might then be read as the articulation of a truth procedure, rather than the lawful defense of the one and only world. As such, it may be read as "in complete line with," rather than as a rival to, Badiou's own project.

In Norman Madarasz's "The Biolinguistic Challenge to an Intrinsic Ontology," the critique of Hegel becomes a kind of lynchpin to draw together two strange bedfellows: Badiou and Noam Chomsky. Badiou, as detailed throughout the volume, argues that ontology and subjectivity are fundamentally subtracted from the state and order of their situations, and this means that they arise according to determinations internal or intrinsic to their emergence. This leaves unclear, as Madarasz notes, their relation to the natural world or biological individual through which their consequences operate, seemingly leaving us with a dualism of ontology and life. It is Hegel, he argues, who aids us in grasping the relationship between an intrinsic ontology and natural life; not via his demonstration of this link, but through the demonstrable limits of his dialectic. While Hegel is perhaps the first to conceptualize the possibility of developing an intrinsic ontology that forsakes a dualism with situated existence—precisely by merging the concept of immanence with conceptuality itself—it is this dialectical resolution that leads him to the denigration of mathematics' philosophical status, as noted in several of the essays in the

first section. Hegel's ontology would then be merely "generative," producing the infinite through the very movements of the same outlined in Ruda's essay, leading to a relatively static continuity of being and world. It is precisely this that leads Badiou to invoke chance and decision as that which escapes this determination, and it is in the axioms of set theory that he finds the discourse most appropriate to this novel beginning. The question, however, is how this set-theoretic structure gets externalized in history and nature? After tracing the development of Chomsky's account of universal grammar, Madarasz draws upon his recent, explicitly set-theoretic account of the "Merge" function to detail how an intrinsic and infinite structure can be detailed as part of humanity's natural endowment. This function is subtracted from any specific language or speaker, but nevertheless explicitly has a non-dialectical relation to its own externalization in the specific, situated forms of linguistic cognition and expression. Contrary, then, to Badiou's objection to the ontological and philosophical import of non-mathematical science, linguistics may provide us with an answer not only as to how the human subject is able to think mathematical infinity, but as to how life and history are linked to ontology's set-theoretic discoveries. If correct, Madarasz's essay suggests that Badiou's move beyond Hegel nevertheless opens the possibility of a mutually illuminating study of the processes of mapping and recursion in Badiou's "intrinsic ontology" and Chomsky's "internal language," and thus of a more complicated relation between set-theoretic ontology and contemporary natural science.

In my own essay, "Badiou and Hegel on Love and the Family," I use the little-discussed topic of love to emphasize both the overlap and the distance between their philosophies. Both thinkers make love into an essential actualization of the genuine subject, above and beyond the merely finite individual. Badiou, however, demands that all forms of identity (fusion, habit, support and above all "family") are warded off by the infinite procedure of love. This not only implies that love arises from a completely unjustified and contingent origin (here, the event as "amorous encounter"), but that this encounter is only preserved if the subjects who act in fidelity to it ensure that their experiences and roles remain rigidly disjunct. Thus, the transformation of the mere individuals must be total, down to their grasp of their own embodiment. As such, love demands radically distinct "sex positions," which Badiou adopts from Lacan under the headings of "Man" and "Woman." This sexed transformation, testified to only by subjective fidelity and belief, is thus a thought, rather than a relationship, and as such, regardless of circumstances, can and must be held to be eternal. While love is equally transformative in Hegel, it does not arise from an event that contingently befalls the lovers; rather it is grounded in the essentially free choice to form a loving union. The individuals who come together, then, are already in common possession of an implicit freedom that allows for genuine consent to love; a

freedom which therefore essentially distinguishes them from their merely given desires, circumstances, and so on. This freedom is infinite and universal to all subjects, although concealed by pre-loving relations with others determined by the contingencies of merely particular individuality. By choosing to unite with another in a relation of love, one freely surrenders their personality to a new and determinate relation grounded in, and actualizing, the freedom shared by both parties. This is why love is “marriage,” for it must be a determinate relation between two that reflects them as free, rather than determined. This marriage may incorporate sex positions, but more importantly in essence does not require them, for it only demands a relation or union to arise between equally free subjects. This relation, moreover, is not eternal, but only retained for as long as the couple commonly will it. Throughout, I make the case for the superiority of Hegel’s case, not only as an account of love, but as an essentially ‘emancipatory’ philosophy.

In his “Fidelity to the Political Event: Hegel, Badiou, and the Return to the Same,” Antonio Calcagno analyzes the different forms of unity, or what he terms “togetherness” in their respective political works. Both philosophers recognize the need for some form of collectivity in order to produce political change or progress. Both, moreover, recognize the fundamental role that the representational state plays in determining the trajectory of political sequences. Hegel, however, advocates for a kind of “internal sovereignty of states, wherein the multiplicity of political actors (citizens, families, corporations) find their expression in an organic totality. This state must reflect more than the “external sovereignty” grounded in the merely contractual, collective will of a contingent multiplicity of elements that happen to exist within the boundaries of a state; rather, it must reflect the rational, immanent order of parts as generated from their historical development. While the state is an identity, then, it is formed from both the internal differentiation and becoming of its parts, and the process of their self-ordering towards such identity. As such, state-forms reflect the historical becoming of political agents and entities across continuous and immanent time. By contrast, Badiou’s politics is grounded neither in states, nor in their constituent parts, but in a contingent and radically singular event which disrupts the count of such a state. Politically, states only play the negative role of instigating events by suppressing the inconsistent multiplicity of their elements through their purportedly organic identities. Political collectives and sequences, then, are defined by their capacity to carry forward, or renew, the effects of such an event. As such, Calcagno notes, political sequences must have their own identity, defined by fidelity, or the incessant, if differentiated, return to their foundational event as defining of the political collective and sequence. However, since Badiou militantly forecloses the possibility of the iteration of the same through differentiation captured by Hegel’s dialectic of becoming, this raises the question of what sort of identity constitutes

genuine fidelity to an event? Shorn of dialectical process, Calcagno argues, Badiou's political sequences, returning incessantly to their origin in fidelity, may ultimately be static, reflecting his overarching concern with subtractive being, rather than historical becoming. In fact, since events are inherently situated and draw on situational resources, they may simply entrench, rather than alter, the fundamental structure of states. Ultimately, Calcagno argues, Hegel's dialectic of identity and difference offers a more plausible account of political collectivity, differentiation and change.

Finally, "Taming the Furies: Badiou and Hegel on *The Eumenides*" offers Alberto Toscano's critique of both Badiou and Hegel for their common refusal to bear the intractable social division of tragedy. Dialectical politics can only emerge, Toscano argues, on the basis of a rupture in the unified and harmonious life of the community. Grounded in strife, and perpetually haunted by threat of dissolution, dialectical political thought grounds itself in the dramatic representation of social division and disruption that we classically name tragedy. It is here that dialectical political thinkers find an enduring source of archaic figures of negativity that must be absorbed, or productively used to construct a redemptive, organic unity. Politics, in short, finds its origin in anti-politics, and dialectical philosophy—indeed, perhaps philosophy itself—consists in thinking the productive overcoming of this origin. Using their common appeals to Aeschylus's *The Eumenides*, Toscano articulates the different forms of dialectical "overcoming" of the tragic in Hegel and Badiou. Where Hegel seeks an organic sublation of the inorganic past through the gradual unification of difference, Badiou strives for the militant abolition of it through the institution of a new right which completely recomposes the law. In terms of the modern anti-politics of capitalism, Badiou seeks to wipe its slate clean by founding a new political truth via post-evental revolt, while Hegel seeks a social method for "embedding" its tragic contradictions in the fabric of social life. Both, however, for Toscano ultimately remain thinkers of reconciliation who affirm a certain affinity or complicity between (dialectical) philosophy and an image of the *polis* which forgets the tragic strife at its origin. As such, both also (if differently) foreclose a certain remembrance of the tragic, or a *mourning* which might open onto another vision of (non-dialectical) politics. Toscano closes with some reflections on the potential costs of this foreclosing, as well as the political consequences of remembering it.

As these essays (and the subsequent "Looking Forward with Hegel and Badiou . . . A Brief Conclusion" by Calcagno) make clear, the Hegel/Badiou relation, as well as its broader philosophical implications, has just begun to be unpacked. In assembling this volume, we hope to have contributed to the demonstration of not only the range of possible interpretations of this relation, but moreover the vital import of its consequences for the future of Continental philosophy.

NOTES

1. For an excellent, panoramic account of the French post-Hegelian tradition, see Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

2. Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 171.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 174.

5. Bruno Bosteels, "Hegel," in A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens, ed., *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts* (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 137–145 (137).

6. For examples of such a, now arguably dominant, "Left" reading of Hegel, see, for example, John Russon, *The Self and Its Body in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), or David Ciavatta, *Spirit, the Family and the Unconscious in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).

7. Bosteels, 141.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 140.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 145.

12. Ibid.

13. See, for example, the essays collected in Stuart Barnett, ed., *Hegel After Derrida* (New York, Routledge, 1998).

14. See Karen Houle and Jim Vernon, eds., *Hegel and Deleuze: Together Again for the First Time* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern, 2013).

15. There are, of course, exceptions, as noted in the examples of Hallward and Bosteels. One clouding feature may be the increasingly common pairing of Badiou's thought with that of Slavoj Žižek, whose avowed "Hegelianism" remains a matter of considerable controversy itself.

I

Badiou *Contra* Hegel

ONE

Measuring Up: Some Consequences of Badiou's Confrontation with Hegel

A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens

INTRODUCTION

In the "Notes, Commentaries, and Digressions" that conclude his great treatise on appearing, *Logics of Worlds*, Alain Badiou writes of G. W. F. Hegel's *Science of Logic* that "I have never ceased measuring myself up to this book, almost as unreadable as Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*" (LW 529). The little précis of his own philosophical piste that follows this confession is highly illuminating, running from the early essay "*La subversion infinitésimale*" through the red years of *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic* and *Theory of the Subject*,¹ to *Being and Event*, and beyond.² Without dwelling on the vicissitudes of this "measuring up," the key terms that immediately emerge from this little confession are worth citing in their own right. They include: the unreadable; the sciences, including intra-mathematical, "subjective" distinctions between algebra and topology; the dialectic; structure and exception; boundary and limit; and the infinite (true and bad). Unquestionably, these are crucial concepts for anyone interested in philosophy and its history, and, more particularly, in the becoming-Badiou of Badiou himself.

Something remains curious in Badiou's lifelong interest in Hegel, however. For if Hegel is regularly affirmed by Badiou as one of the "three crucial philosophers" with Plato and Descartes, he seems the odd man out in a number of regards. Certain commentators would perhaps consider that Hegel's importance derives from Badiou's political affiliations rather than from something specific about Hegel's philosophy as such.

Why? Because a received image from the history of philosophy would render Plato, Descartes, and Kant more compatible—with each other and with Badiou's own evident proclivities—in their shared divisions of worlds, their rigorous approach to Ideas, and their commitment to science as a thought that is not simply "incorporable" to the philosophical concept. Hegel, by contrast, is the epitome of implicative, absolute knowledge, for whom all dualisms are destined to transform themselves into their opposites, reconciling at a higher level in and through their very diversification. It is noteworthy that three of the most interesting and pressing concepts at stake go unmentioned by Badiou in his little "Notes," if they are certainly implied: totality, negation, and reflexivity.

Hegel is *the* thinker of totality, of the One-Whole—that which Badiou interrogates Hegel about incessantly. Whereas Plato and Descartes are explicitly guided by a mathematical condition, and Kant himself is often held to be philosophically justifying a primacy of natural science, Hegel explicitly thinks of such knowledge as secondary and degraded compared to the knowledge delivered by philosophy.³ Moreover, this is given a key operation: to make the gap between knowledge and being that is the truth-missing-in-action, working in its very lack, which is the ultimate key of negativity, resolve itself in the absolute. But anyway, whoever said "crucial" must cough up a "positive" repetition or result?

If we return in more detail to Badiou's own self-confessed trajectory, we find several symptomatic prevarications. Between *Theory of the Subject* and *Being and Event*, Badiou himself becomes Badiou—that is, an essential thinker—only by affirmatively curbing his submission to the Hegelian enterprise and by undertaking a radical break with the old master. The first of these tracts still treats Hegel and the dialectic as absolute, if in the very singular fashion that Hegel must be divided in two *for the sake of dialectic*;⁴ the second breaks with both by way of a new theory of conditions, of the event and of being. Badiou himself knows this very well, yet it also seems he can't always quite permit himself the full sense of this rupture. To pick up on another entry in the aforementioned "Notes, Commentaries, and Digressions," we find the following double statement:

- a. The dialectic remains a crucial question for me, even if *Being and Event* appears in this regard as a turn.
- b. *Theory of the Subject* is a book that the further developments of my thought do not invalidate—quite the opposite. (LW 523)

Contra or perhaps *citra* Badiou, then, we will argue that: a) if the dialectic indeed remains "a crucial question" in its Hegelian mode, it is as an enemy to be combated with the most current means; hence b) the properly "dialectical" aspects of *Theory of the Subject*, already subject there to division, topological intervention, and recomposition, are in fact fundamentally invalidated by Badiou's "further developments"; yet c) an unex-

pected avatar of the dialectic re-emerges in Badiou in his doctrine of the poem in *Being and Event*; before d) disappearing again with the turn to objective phenomenology in *Logics of Worlds*; while e) a different element of the dialectic returns at the same time. The key to this argument is the demonstration of a particular torsion in the confrontation with Hegel himself.

In making this argument, we will have recourse to certain elements of Badiou's work now perhaps already over-familiar from secondary commentary, including the relation he constructs between mathematics and logic. But we will also mark two further, connected themes: the first is that philosophy itself must learn from its others, the various outsides that are *pre*-philosophical (the routines of worlds), *non*-philosophical (radically independent forms of thought), and *anti*-philosophical (explicit, intricate contestations of the priority of philosophy from a hostile proximity); the second is that philosophy then has to re-articulate these outsides in a new system that simultaneously decides upon a handful of necessary philosophical operations, including negation, totality, and reflexivity. The non-dialectical concept of the event is crucial to this reconstruction.

Yet, if the present essay is essentially a remark about the emergence and subsequent modification of the concept of the event in Badiou, we will hardly deal directly with that concept at all. What we will instead indicate, by way of a long yet necessary detour, is how and why the event receives some of the predicates that it does: split, reflexive, and inconsistent. These predicates are the consequences of a struggle with Hegel, for whom they are fundamental to the dialectic itself. Badiou does this by breaking Hegel's logical dialectic into two asymmetrical parts by way of mathematics, such that, on the one side, we have a new articulation of being and nothingness, while, on the other side, we have a new articulation of splitting, reflexivity, and inconsistency—at once methodological and subjective. In *Being and Event*, the latter predicates (splitting, reflexivity, and inconsistency) are linked essentially to the poem.⁵ The ingenuity of this cleaving of Hegel by asymmetrically dividing the dialectic between mathematics and poetry leaves a residue, however: that of appearing. In the reintroduction of appearing in *Logics of Worlds*, Hegel makes another kind of return: in the concomitant disappearance of poetry as having such a role. But what disappears absolutely throughout Badiou's work is something that has always been considered to be non-negotiable from a Hegelian perspective: a consistent thinking of the Whole.

SITUATION

The dominance of Hegel as a philosophical presence in France between approximately 1930 and 1960 is well-known and well-documented. As Jacques Derrida puts it:

there were few who did not situate their thought in the shadow of Hegel and in the legacy left by Kojève's and Koyré's meditations. And not only in the more or less academic discipline of philosophy (Lévinas, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, but also Breton, Bataille, Klossowski, Lacan, and so many others) and not only in that generation: Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard, all shared at least, with a few others, a sort of active and organized allergy, we could even say an organizing aversion, towards the Hegelian dialectic. They all shared this trait, of situating themselves philosophically, and they did this explicitly, *from* this rejection.⁶

What Derrida here denominates as "an organizing aversion" has a situational bearing upon Badiou's own personal affiliations with Hegel. In such a context, Badiou's affirmation of Hegel as the "stakes of an interminable conflict" runs counter to the dominating philosophical aversion of his times.⁷ Let's mark that the *nouveaux philosophes* drastically advanced this aversion, in and against Kojève's wake, and precisely to the *Phenomenology*. But Badiou's affirmation is also directed against the aversion's political (mis)uses under the broad rubric of "Hegelian Marxism." "Hence," Badiou et al. assert, "Marx is neither the same nor the other of Hegel. Marx is the divider [*diviseur*] of Hegel. He simultaneously assigns its irreversible validity (the rational kernel of the dialectic) and its integral falsity (the idealist system)."⁸ Moreover, Badiou's apparently similar cataloguing of Kojève's Hegel's influence takes a slight but significantly different tack to Derrida's. For Badiou et al., "During the first half of the century, Hegel served as an idealist mediation for the needs of our intelligentsia. This was followed by the revenge of the all powerful scientific tradition: it was the apolitical Marx of the professors who has taken the scene; Hegel disappeared in the bitter backstage."⁹

As Badiou and his colleagues write in this 1978 essay, coterminous with the seminars republished as *Theory of the Subject*: "all this requires that we give back a voice to the Hegel who has been gagged—the essential Hegel, the one so feverishly annotated by Lenin, the one whose knowledge was required, as Marx declared, for understanding *Capital*: the Hegel of the *Science of Logic*."¹⁰ In other words: 1) Badiou's affirmation of Hegel affronts the strong "tragic" line of contemporaneous French philosophy, as well as the prevailing anti-philosophy and sophistic *nouveaux philosophes*, which takes Hegel as *the* enemy;¹¹ 2) this affirmation simultaneously affronts the political uses of Hegel then current; 3) the key text in this regard is not the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but the *Science of Logic* (the emphasis on the *Science of Logic* affronts also the privileged reception of the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*); 4) this text is key because it is in line with the dictates of the foundational authorities of political economy and political practice, above all, Marx and Lenin and Mao; 5) this lineage does so because the *Science of Logic* is the place where the dialectic that enables a proper *materialist* knowledge of the relation be-

tween thought, being, and appearing is first forged and absolutely expressed. If Badiou's own abiding *polemical* attitude is patent from this summary—wherever you are (not Hegel!), it's quite certain he doesn't want to be (not not-Hegel!)—so is his commitment at this point to the necessity to think being, appearing, and (the political) subject together.

THEORY OF THE SUBJECT

From the very beginning of this text, then, the primacy of (a non-standard, divisive) interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic is at stake. It is as apparent in the use of the term "dialectician" as an honorific (as we see with the "great classical German dialecticians, Hegel and Hölderlin . . . the great modern French dialecticians, Mallarmé and Lacan"), as in the grand themes pursued explicitly throughout. As Oliver Feltham notes, "The first moment in Badiou's argument is thus a synthesis; the poet, the philosophers and the psychoanalyst are grouped together due to their contributions to what he calls the 'structural dialectic.'" ¹² Moreover, "each of these dialecticians thinks part of the structural dialectic in their own terms . . . but the terms in which this [renewed] dialectic is built . . . are Badiou's own." ¹³ We should underline the tension already evident in this method between a kind of synthesizing-yet-schismatic drive that is "Hegelian," and a certain tendency of Badiou to pull against both the received image of Hegelianism as well as Hegel "himself," fighting the eternal "war on two fronts" by the creation of neologisms.

The entirety of *Theory of the Subject* is a work of division in this sense—of Hegel, Mallarmé, and Lacan—subtended by instances of political struggle exemplifying in its practical occurrence the new knowledge under construction. Badiou divides each dialectic in two, relative to its own impasse, as part of the process of "dialecticising the dialectic," of being *rigorously* dialectical. The vicissitudes of this procedure are impossible to summarize. Let us just note three features as they pertain to Hegel in particular.

First, Hegel is exposed to his own immanent division: between the movement of departure and return he calls "alienation," and that of "scission" in which every unity is a constant division of irrecoverable departure. On Badiou's reading, alienation follows a circular trajectory, a sort of becoming-other from itself insofar as this is inscribed as part of the trajectory of return: the becoming of the concept such that something of necessity is inscribed there. The second process, "scission"—scission as fundamental split—asserts that no relation at all subtends the two movements, whether projective or retroactive. Thus there is no self to ground alienation, and no return as stability of the process.

Badiou's position, reading for the "Real of Hegel," his materialism *pace* Lenin, is that scission is to be found beneath alienation in Hegel.

When, in order to “get going” as it were, Hegel posits “the something” — that there is something rather than nothing—he also posits this something as difference *from* something other. For Badiou, a division is presupposed to get going, which, Badiou continues, Hegel will forget or veil *toward* the concept. Thus alienation, which clearly *marks* division, is in fact a veil over scission. Everything happens, Badiou states, “as if the something else was the post-position of the something” — the something is repeated in the something else (TS 5). Hence repetition, while marking a process of a two, simultaneously covers over the scission that makes this two possible.

In a second move, Badiou implements a set of scriptural formalizations (e.g., A/A_p)¹⁴, along with his idiosyncratic vocabulary (e.g., “splace,” “outplace”), in order to reorder the initial distinction and to mark the immanent, structural division between being—the being of the whole—and nothing (or that which is the nothing of the whole, such as the whole founds its consistency there as its negation). Badiou effectively deploys an algebra to the “effect of structure,” and a topology to the algebra which re-reads the former in terms of movement or process, thus undermining the static, structural ordering of parts to the whole. These indexical or scriptural formalizations both materialize and de-phenomenalize Hegel’s determinist “logic” or “unity of opposites (*bestimmung*)” (TS 9).

A third move follows, wherein Badiou re-divides the divisions, breaking what is usually understood in Hegel as “contradiction” into three further components: difference, correlation, and position. This, in turn, is reformulated in the terms of the “structural” and “historical” dialectics, “logic of places and logic of forces” (TS 53). The goal of this engagement with Hegel is not to have done with Hegel but to discover and retrieve “Hegel’s materialism,” where it “lay” in Hegel such that it can help reverse the sorry state of the current situation in terms of what it shows itself to think and with regard also to what is and can be done and thus to establish a consistency hitherto unremarked, which Badiou calls subject. Badiou is not looking for the subject in Hegel—the Hegelian subject as such—but looking in Hegel to see where and how the subject can come to be as *supplement* to the materialist dialectic: the formal theory of revolutionary practice. In other words, the subject under its own steam, as force: while included or placed within the splace, the subject, as outplace, will be that which is the force of the displacement of this splace, in the last instance.¹⁵

What, then, are the hallmarks of the renovated dialectic elaborated by Badiou which follow this trajectory—which is that of keeping steadily “out of place” (TS 21)?¹⁶ First, the question of totality, which, if significantly complicated by Badiou, is never not at stake. Second, the operations of negation, which are examined in extraordinary detail through the interpretations of Hegel, Mallarmé, Lacan, Mao, and others, are mined

for their creative powers: this is where we find the formalization, the new division of contradiction, and the neologisms. Third, the necessity for a mode of non-standard reflexivity, bound here to a specific figure of action: "Love what you will never believe twice" (TS 331); "The essence of confidence lies in having confidence in confidence," (TS 326); and so on. Finally, and most critically, the name *dialectic* remains in *Theory of the Subject* that of the only acceptable onto-logical process of thinking as such—"the law of being" and the "force of the subject"—as that which enables a paradoxical binding of totality, negation, and reflexivity. But it is precisely these aspects of the dialectic that will be contested by *Being and Event*. For a number of reasons, even in the highly irregular interpretation and use that Badiou makes of it here, it turns out the Hegelian dialectic cannot be sustained. So: totality, negation, reflexivity, unique logical method—all must go.

BEING AND EVENT

By 1988, Hegel will no longer function as he had previously done for Badiou. Rather, in this world-historical work, the most decisive of Badiou's treatises, the dialectic is put to rest according to a number of modalities: 1) the dialectic is no longer the only acceptable mode of thinking as such; 2) there is, definitively, no longer any possible totality; 3) negation must be considered as other than the split determination of (structural) alienation and (historical) scission, etc.; 4) reflexivity is no longer a crucial moment of being or of knowledge of being, but is instead given a crucial regional import. In a global sense, *Being and Event* is therefore explicitly a rigorously anti-Hegelian work, a post-Hegelian work, and a non-Hegelian work. In its most direct moment, it confronts Hegel on one of the most notorious points of his work, the problematic of infinity as delivered through the dialectic of boundary and limit. The fracture that Badiou will effect within Hegel is to show how the mathematical infinite of number cannot be reconciled with a dialectical infinite of quality.¹⁷

This demonstration is given in terms of the rivalry between mathematics and logic. Famously, Hegel demotes the empty and atemporal ratiocinations of mathematics in a number of texts: in the "Preface" to the *Phenomenology* he declares that "philosophical cognition includes both [existence and essence], whereas mathematical cognition sets forth only the genesis of the *existence*, that is, the *being* of the nature of the thing in *cognition* as such." Hegel immediately continues: "In mathematical cognition, insight is an activity external to the thing," and that its "*purpose* or *Notion* is *magnitude*. It is just this relationship that is unessential, lacking the *Notion*." Finally, mathematics "does not attain to qualitative, immanent motion or *self-movement*."¹⁸ In *The Science of Logic*, in the remark concerning "The Specific Nature of the Notion of the Mathematical Infi-

nite," Hegel gives a nuanced summary of the relation between the meta-physical infinite and the mathematical, pointing out that the former cannot invalidate the results of the latter and the latter does not contest the inferences of the former, but nor does it reach conclusions about its own status—the "metaphysics of its concept." For Hegel, in short, and more on this below, the pure Notion of the infinite is revealed in the science but, for reasons of its method and "determinateness," remains over, unthought, and thus unthinkable, by it. The upshot is that the Notion, captured conceptually outside mathematics will have been the basis of the mathematical infinite, all along.¹⁹

Let's note in passing that it is presumably because of such declarations that Hegel's reputation in the wake of Russell's critiques sank so low among analytic philosophy. Yet, as Terry Pinkard puts it, Russell's remarks show no real comprehension of the key text in which Hegel confronts calculus, the infinitesimal, and the infinite: the very *Science of Logic* that has always been Badiou's own crucial interlocutor.²⁰

It is precisely this text, then, that becomes Badiou's target in *Being and Event*. It is of course not enough for Badiou to simply announce, in a general and peremptory fashion, that "mathematics is ontology"; the conditions, justifications, and consequences of such a declaration must be drawn in detail. Nowhere is the struggle more determining than in regards to the concept of the infinite; and nowhere in modern philosophy is a stronger claim made regarding the status of the infinite than in Hegel's masterwork. Badiou opens Meditation Fifteen by pinpointing the critical operations and stakes. First, in noting that Hegel needs to indiscriminate integrally the other and the Other in order that presentation and structure come to be genetically imbricated, Badiou also emphasizes that this impasse re-emerges at the infinite, in the form of the generation of a supplementary division, that between quality and quantity. In order, too, that the double functionaries of other/Other and quality/quantity can be sustained at all, Hegel must simultaneously devalue the status and claims of mathematics.

For Hegel to generate structure from presentation, he must establish an aggregative and immanent method which enables a movement from the pure point of being and its primordial undifferentiated unity with nothingness to the auto-determination of the good infinite. This method is of course the dialectic itself, which, as Badiou notes, has further recourse here to an operatory division between the limit (*Grenze*) and the boundary, frontier, or threshold (*Schranke*). "All of Hegel," Badiou writes, "can be found in the following: the 'still-more' is immanent to the 'already': everything that is, is already 'still-more'" (BE 162). The still-more is *surpassing*; the already, *determinateness*. These provide "the architecture of the concept; the starting point of the dialectic." Why? Because the emergence of beings through a process of determination requires, in the very positing-as that determination effects, the act of positing itself in-

scribes a productive ambivalence within its determination, that thereby necessarily pushes any being beyond itself. Take the following instance of such a production from *Science of Logic*, from the section on "Existence":

Now in so far as something in its limit both *is* and *is not*, and these moments are an immediate, qualitative distinction, the non-existence and the existence of the something fall outside each other. Something has its existence *outside* its limit (or, as representation would also have it, *inside* it); in the same way the other, too, since it is something, has it outside it. The limit is the *middle point between* the two at which they leave off. They have existence *beyond* each other, *beyond their limit*; the limit, as the non-being of each, is the other of both.²¹

As a characteristic moment in the dialectic, one can immediately see that a being, in being limited, simultaneously has a being already beyond its becoming-itself in its being-limited, and that this being-beyond-itself necessarily pushes the being beyond the limit at which it is itself (and not itself). The one of being goes beyond the being that it marks *as* a being in order that the being come to surpass its own non-being. This means, as Badiou emphasizes, that infinity must *always-already* exist in any moment of being although it—infinity—is also simultaneously *not-yet-until-it-will-have-been*. Infinity for Hegel must therefore be a *law* of being—not, as Badiou's own set-theoretical interpretation holds, a *decision*, that is, an axiom regarding being (cf. BE 163). We saw in *Theory of the Subject* that the conceptual name, or the thought of this "law of being" *in actu* is "dialectic" for Hegel and, finally, albeit materially renovated, for Badiou too. The move from *Theory of the Subject* to *Being and Event*, from Hegel renewed to a renewal despite Hegel, from a *generative* to a *subtractive* ontology, could well be that from law to axiom.

It's not that Hegel isn't aware of the difficulties. On the contrary, as we have already suggested, he is absolutely conscious of them insofar as his demonstration at once proliferates supplementary distinctions *and* simultaneously condemns mathematical cognition. But he insists on maintaining that the infinite must itself be generated from the immanent generation of the finite from the initial nothing-of-being itself. So the finite must repeat itself to the point (or non-point) of infinity. For set theory, however, such an *indefinite* repetition is not enough to guarantee infinity—which needs its own axiom. Again, Hegel himself is aware of this gap, denominated by the famous distinction between "bad" and "good" infinities. As Hegel announces, after an incomparably detailed sequence of ratiocinations on calculus:

We have already spoken earlier of the bad infinity and its deceptions; the universality of the concept is the *achieved beyond*, whereas that bad infinity remains afflicted with a beyond which is unattainable but remains a mere *progression* to infinity.²²

How, then, can one move from the bad infinite to the “achieved beyond?” Badiou’s own summation of Hegel’s method here is clarifying: “Beyond repeating itself, the something detains, in excess of that repetition, the essential and presentable capacity to repeat itself” (BE 165). The good infinite engages the motivated return of the initial void of presentation itself, but now as the place-of-taking-place of being’s endless repetitions, in such a way that the drab “one more” of other after other gives onto the place—the *infinite void power* founding repetition—of the Other.

It is precisely here that Badiou notes how the dialectic of finite/infinite, bad/good infinity, other/Other is symptomatically split by Hegel into the dialectic of quantity/quality. But quantitative and qualitative infinities have utterly different principles by which they are generated, “proliferation” in the case of the first, “identification” in the case of the latter. Whereas quality emerges from the equivocation of limit/boundary as immanent generative operation, quantity has only an external mark as its principle, the one/another, without any internal or intrinsic power of genesis. Desperate to recoup the threat of dissemination that pure quantity threatens, Hegel asserts a qualitative essence of this quality that returns the mere lifeless externality of empty proliferation to an introjective power. But, as Badiou quite rightly asks, what justifies the nomination of this quality-of-quantity as “infinite?”

I have no quarrel with there being a qualitative essence of quantity, but why name it “infinity?” The name suits qualitative infinity because it was drawn from the void, and the void was clearly the transfinite polarity of the process. In numerical proliferation there is no void because the exterior of the One is its interior, the pure law which causes the same-as-the-One to proliferate (BE 169).

Number—and mathematics—returns to rupture the dialectical attempt to conjoin finite and infinite, bad and good, quantity and quality. What Badiou therefore exposes in Hegel is that being thought mathematically must be disjoined from totality generated through the travails of the negative.²³

Yet is this the end of the story? If Badiou has thus shorn off part of the dialectical machinery of Hegel in favour of the quantitative infinite, what becomes of the Hegelian residues or remainder? It is no doubt significant that the meditation on Hegel is the very last one in *Part III: Being: Nature and Infinity*. Heidegger/Galileo, making the link to *Part IV: The Event: History and Ultra-one*. Without having the space to expand fully on this remark here, we need to note that what has just been shorn off the dialectic of being by Badiou—quality, contradiction, and immanent process, hence a *subject*—immediately make its return at the level of the event-truth process. For Badiou, the thought of the event is *contradictory*, that is, inconsistent, bound to an irreducible Two of a split. Its matrix is $e_x = \{x \in X, e_x\}$; its name is a pure *quality*; it is based on an *intervention* linked to the

consequence of another event; it founds a *process* that is conditional. In brief, several of the key predicates linked to the qualitative dialectic in Hegel are now assigned to the event-truth operations—or of what-is-not-being-qua-being.

These phantoms of Hegelianism are, however, assigned to an entirely different condition than Hegel's. It is poetry, and above all the writings of Mallarmé that provide the basis for Badiou's account. As is well-known, for Hegel, art was effectively over as a truth-process by his time, so the oft-mentioned elements of Mallarmé's own putative Hegelianism is rather a post-Hegelianism too. In such a context, then, we might suggest that Badiou here takes up several residues of Hegelianism foreclosed by the thought of being in mathematics and reassigns them to the event. That the modern French dialectician Mallarmé is read in *Theory of the Subject* right after the classical German dialectician Hegel already suggests this trajectory.²⁴ There, however, even as he points to a way out via the "vanishing cause," Mallarmé supposedly reaches his limit *within* the structural dialectic.²⁵

In taking up these residues, then, Badiou forces upon them another anti-Hegelian provenance, that of poetry; which, in this case, thinks what-is-not-being-as-such, that is, the event. Poetry has thus become extrinsic to any thought of the whole, and thereby escapes the stranglehold of the One-All as identified by Badiou: "everything is intrinsic, since being-other is the one-of-being, and everything possesses an identificatory mark in the shape of the interiority of non-being" (BE 163). Where the Hegelian One was, the Badiouan Two will come to be.²⁶

LOGICS OF WORLDS

Is that it for the Hegelian dialectic *chez* Badiou then? Frankly, yes. It turns out, however, that it's not over for the *word*: the very beginning of *Logics of Worlds* in fact *resurrects* it, under the heading of the *materialist dialectic*. But then, as Badiou says, his philosophy is consecrated to thought of real change and in this vein necessarily stages a "*confrontation* with the dialectic."²⁷ "Resurrection" itself turns out to be a key category of subjective truth-process in this book, and the naïve might imagine that a return to Hegel is thereby underway. Fortunately or not, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, what's at stake is not a Hegelian return, but a kind of self-consciously ideological nomination. As Badiou confesses in an interview with Lauren Sedofsky in *Artforum*:

LS: What I want to clarify is just how you've introduced dialectic and materialism into the respective formal constructs being = mathematics and appearance = logic. In *Logiques*, materialism is introduced as a postulate; dialectic emerges only in the site where a choice must be made. Everyone knows that Badiou is a materialist dialectician, and yet

both the materialism and the dialectic appear to have been appended to a neutral metaphysics.

AB: Yes, here you're quite right to pose the question. If philosophy presents itself as a materialist dialectic, it must situate the dialectic and the materialist within its development. If not, materialist dialectic remains an ideology. As I told you, I accept that it's an ideology. But once you've opened the philosophical possibility, you have to resituate this ideological prescription within the corpus itself.²⁸

Certainly, "ideology" is not a dismissive term: on the contrary, metaphysics and ideology are, in a post-Althusserian way, and in a post-*Theory of the Subject* way too, integrally linked. But it does underline just how different such a dialectic is from Hegel's. It should also underline just how equivocal any recourse to "dialectic" must now be when applied to Badiou. The key points of dissension again remain the problem of the whole, negation, and reflexivity—nothing in *Logics of Worlds* recants on that of *Being and Event*—and thus it is precisely Hegel that Badiou targets in these regards.

In *Logics of Worlds*, then, everything is the same, ontologically speaking, but the stakes are different. The challenge is now how to think these exceptional events, truths, subjects, insofar as they *appear*; that is, insofar as events, truths, and subjects are *there as such* for a world. This means analyzing them not simply in terms of their being-consistent, but also in terms of their *apparent* consistency too, which, when dealing with the category of exception, is tricky. The exception, which is the form a truth takes, must also be thought to appear as precisely an exception to that very transcendental schema which would except it as such. Moreover, *Logics of Worlds* proceeds to think appearance, that a thing or object be there, in a world, *without* recourse to the subject as that category or consciousness for whom it must appear. It is an *objective* phenomenology, for that which appears, appears to or for or in or as a world, and not to or for a subject. Thus Badiou develops a "transcendental of a world," whereby a world becomes the condition of the appearing of being as a *being*. Again, he disjoins object and subject. This time, the object appears without the subject, whereas earlier, in thinking the event qua being, the subject was that for which no object provides its thought. In other words, no means of the subject-object reconciliation or adequation or dialecticization are at issue.

The subsection devoted to Hegel in *Logics of Worlds* is titled precisely "Inexistence of the Whole." It appears within the section of Book II entitled, "Greater Logic, 1 The Transcendental." The mode of analysis in every section is threefold, Badiou says, containing a triple exposition: "conceptual (and exemplifying), historical (an author), and formal." This triple exposition accords with three accompanying motifs: a transcendental organization of worlds; the exposition of the transcendental; and the question of what negation is in appearing (LW 99–100).

So the chapter on Hegel is an historical one, with these motifs animate within it. Badiou says here that Hegel is the “thinker par excellence of the dialectical correlation between being and being there, between essence and existence,” and the chapter is really a measuring up of Badiou’s transcendental logic to Hegel’s logic in these terms. We should note that this “greater logic” of Badiou’s is absolutely not what “pious phenomenologists or liberal grammarians,” the mainstay, he says, of “university discourse,” imagine it to be. Rather—and this due to the mathematical foundations it can now attest to—the typical linguistic sense given to logic by such philosophy is “entirely reducible to transcendental operations” (LW 100–1). That is to say, to the logical operations provided by Category Theory, which means that, in rewriting prior logics without loss, Category Theory has also preserved (dare we say: sublated?) the logic of the logicians.

Thus, in measuring himself up to Hegel, Badiou is also saying that the logic of Hegel was neither grammarian (the formal regulation of statements) or phenomenological, at least in that sense we have of it either from Husserl or Heidegger. Otherwise, there is no point in taking Hegel’s measure in such a way. “What is decisive,” Badiou says, “is following the Hegelian idea in its movement, that is at the very moment in which it explicitly governs the method of thinking. This alone will allow us, in the name of the materialist dialectic, to do justice to our father: the master of the ‘idealist’ dialectic” (LW 141).

Badiou takes the following tack with regard to Hegel and the inexistence of the whole. If being is multiple, then the Whole must also be multiple, a multiple of multiples; it must also be a *reflexive* multiple, insofar as it must present itself as part of its own multiple-presentation; all non-reflexive multiples must by definition be part of this multiple, and we could consider this part in itself, asking whether it is reflexive or non-reflexive; if it is reflexive, then it cannot be part of the non-reflexive multiples among which it has been defined (contradiction); if it is non-reflexive, because it presents *all* the non-reflexive multiples, it must present itself as part of this whole, and is therefore reflexive (contradiction). The rational thought of the Whole is inconsistent in such a way that it cannot be recuperated dialectically (cf. LW 109–10).

This argument, adapted from Russell’s famous paradox—and which he also deploys to not dissimilar effect, though with different aims, in both *Being and Event* and *Theory of the Subject*—leads Badiou to several further remarks. For the thought of the Whole must be, just as Hegel said, inconsistent and reflexive. Yet, contra Hegel, the *negation* at work in it cannot provide a *dynamic* motor for the Whole’s becoming-consistent through a process of temporalization. Moreover, also contra Hegel, the infinite cannot be identified with the whole, the former being now a local and limited determination. These remarks receive further confirmation

later in the book, where Hegel is confronted on these terms, as “the master of the ‘idealist’ dialectic” (LW 141). In sum, we have with Hegel:

the triple of the Whole: the immediate, or the-thing-according-to-its-being; mediation, or the-thing-according-to-its-essence; the overcoming of mediation, or the-thing-according-to-its-concept. . . . Hegel remarks that the complete thinking of the triple of the Whole makes four. This is because the Whole itself, as immediacy-of-the-result, still lies beyond its own dialectical construction (LW 144).

The problem then becomes the appearing of negation in appearing. As Badiou points out, for Hegel, this means that the negation of a being cannot be its destruction, as such a negation must itself take place within appearing; such a negation cannot therefore be classical (i.e., supported by the Principle of Contradiction and the Law of Excluded Middle). Negation is an originary determination for Hegel, precisely because his account of it enables *a bond to be maintained between being and appearing at every point*—what else is “phenomenology” in its most profound aspect?

But, as we have seen, being is treated by Badiou mathematically: if he now turns to appearing as such, it is through a mathematized logic, which, if its generality and mobility can permit certain exceptions to classical principles in the forms of intuitionism and paraconsistency, still cannot permit, first, a re-binding of being and appearing under a single logic or, second, a temporal dynamism given to their concepts. It is here that Badiou creates his “categorical” concept of the “reverse,” which, if bearing certain features with Hegel’s negation, nonetheless enables none of the dialectical interiorization required by the latter.²⁹ Indeed: “the reverse of the reverse of a degree of appearance is not necessarily identical to that degree.” Moreover: “The line we shall follow consists in basing the logical possibility of negation in appearing, without thereby positing that negation as such appears. In effect, the concept suited to the apparent will not be, in a given world, its negation, but what we will call its reverse” (LW 107).³⁰

In an interview in *Critical Inquiry* in 2008, Badiou puts it more simply: “Contrary to Hegel, for whom the negation of the negation produces a new affirmation, I think we must assert that today negativity, properly speaking, does not create anything new. It destroys the old, of course, but does not give rise to a new creation.” He proceeds to reiterate “our contemporary need to produce a non-Hegelian category of negation.”³¹ Indeed, as he says even more recently, what is needed is an “affirmative dialectics”:³² “This axiomatic solution, which puts the negative at the very origin of appearing, cannot satisfy us. As I’ve said, negation for us is not primitive but derivative” (LW 151). This is indeed one of the stakes of the topos and categorical theory deployed by Badiou.³³ Here, Hegel is not rebuked, as in *Being and Event*, by a *mathematics* of infinity that trumps and exposes his logic of limits; he is rather trumped and exposed

by *logic* itself: one that corresponds to “a new philosophical proposition adequate to all forms of creative novelty.”³⁴

Two new and pressing problems open up for Badiou on the basis of his revised logic. First, how to suture “being” back to “appearing?” For Hegel, as we have noted, it is precisely negation itself that conditions the becoming of the ruptures and the transitions between being and its appearing, working itself out according to the monumental dialectical procedure. Take the mind-boggling presentation of “Force and the Understanding” in the *Phenomenology*, in which Hegel analyses how the being of forces open up appearance in their very vanishing, which then itself splits appearance into itself and the “complete void” of its supersensible opposite, which then must itself be thought as *appearance qua appearance* insofar as it is the sensuous posited in its truth . . . and so forth.³⁵ Once, however, that Badiou has split being and appearing according to the division between mathematics and logic, he cannot rely on negation to re-suture the two. This then becomes the unenviable role of “the postulate of materialism” in which “every atom is real”: “in effect, [this postulate] stipulates that the virtuality of an apparent’s appearing in such and such a world is always rooted in its *actual* ontological composition” (LW 251). We cannot discuss this feature in more detail here; suffice it to say in this context that the “real atom” has had to be constructed in order to take over one of the most powerful functions of Hegelian negation, that of forging a bond between being and appearing.

Second, whereas poetry provides the thought of the event in *Being and Event*, in appearing it must be logic itself that prescribes the constitution of the event. In returning to the event as what is extrinsic to the thought of being as such and what affirms itself within appearing in terms of a situated intensity of appearing, Hegel will have an apparent revenge: poetry must be re-suppressed as a paradigm for thinking the event. As we move from being to appearing, the problematic of the event is forced to shift its phenomenal qualities. Certainly, the event has to retain the same predicates of reflexivity, revelation, and disappearance. Yet, given that the event and its site must now be placed in a different articulation with each other, in order that the necessity of (affirmative) destruction of elements and relations return: the event *is* an event site. Therefore, as befits the problems of appearing, the thought of the event is no longer identified with the poetic inscription as such—given it is not its not-being that is here at stake, correlated as it is to the site whose appearing is affirmed in terms of order as minimum. This is clarified in *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, where Badiou lists the following:

the insurrection of slaves under Spartacus’ leadership or the first day of the Paris Commune, in politics; the Chauvet cave artists’ paintings of horses or the architecture of Brasilia, in the arts; Julie and Sant-Preux in Rousseau’s novel *The New Heloise* or Dido and Aeneas in Berlioz’s op-

era *The Trojans*, in love; and Galois' invention of the theory of groups or Euclid's presentation of the theory of prime numbers, in science.³⁶

Even the "primordial statements" that now supplant in the realm of appearing the pure qualitative poetic nominations from the realm of being do not especially privilege the poetic. Here, Pessoa and Mallarmé are cited indifferently with Marx and Galileo.³⁷ On this, then, both Badiou and Hegel come to agree again: poetry has no special privileges under the rubric of the phenomenon. Other than that place it has as subtraction and dissemination and in contest and concert with the philosophy it rivals and conditions such that, as Badiou says they both say after Mallarmé: "There, wherever it may be, deny the unsayable—it lies."³⁸

FINALE

Could the situation be any clearer? The young(ish) Badiou, resistant to the commonplaces of the present of the 1970s, reconstructs a radical form of the Hegelian dialectic to think together philosophy and political practice. In doing so, however, certain abiding obsessions—with mathematics, psychoanalysis, theater, and poetry—are also integrated into the mix as the necessary form(ation) of destruction *and* recomposition. But something's wrong with this: the whole thing is still too caught up with the thought of the whole: destruction, in the end, returning the subject by a thread to its placed determination within it. *Being and Event* institutes an irreversible rupture with the dialectic on the point of this articulated impasse, illuminating and delimiting certain previously fused elements: mathematics is separated from logic in order to become ontology in its own right; in doing so, it is also separated from politics, art, and love, which are conditionally separated from each other; negation is *really* pluralized according to its conditions, and formalized according to the mathematics of forcing; there is no One, there is no totality, there is no possible history of truth; philosophy itself becomes a derivative and sporadic enterprise of the compossibility of being, event, subject, truth.

What remains of the dialectic, and Hegel, after all this? Truth continues to be thought as a process, but bears only the most attenuated kind of analogy to the dialectical process proper. The event is given some of the hallmarks of the dialectic (split, inconsistent, and reflexive), but it is essentially local, vanishing, and unknowable (contrast these terms with Badiou's conception of the encyclopedia of knowledge founded by mathematics). The event is formally *compatible* with the suspension of the foundation of being, not dialectically *related* to being. Yet appearing, not being *being*, is thereby also lost. In the effort to reconceptualize it in *Logics*, Hegel makes another return: as he does so, only to again be vanquished by contemporary logic, poetry as the separative thought of the inconsistency of the event also drops out, to be replaced by other narrative, visu-

al, theatrical, and aural materials and modes as befitting a distributive analysis of worlds of relative intensity. It seems that poetry as evental inscription cannot quite tolerate the rigors of its apparition in worlds. Or perhaps the poetry of the event, in gaining a logical currency, loses its paradigmatic inconsistency.

What we might note in conclusion, however, is how crucial Hegel still proves to the entire development of Badiou's *un*-Hegelian work—not just as inspiration or antagonist—but as continuing to shape certain key movements in Badiou's work, perhaps even despite the latter's best efforts. What, despite all this, remains absolutely foreclosed of Hegel, is any consistent thinking of totality. God is—and will forever remain—*wholly* dead.

NOTES

1. "Between 1970 and 1980, I refined the schemas of the dialectic almost incessantly, constantly interrelating Mao's canonical texts (*On Contradiction*, *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*) and Hegel" (LW 529).

2. See A. Badiou, "Infinitesimal Subversion," in P. Hallward and K. Peden (eds.), *Concept and Form*, Vol. 1: *Selections from the "Cahiers pour l'Analyse"* (London: Verso, 2012), 187–207; A. Badiou, *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic*, ed. and trans. T. Tho (Mebourne: re.press, 2011); TS; BE.

3. In the *Republic*, Plato conceives "dialectic" as a higher order form of thought than geometry (*the* advanced mathematics for Plato) but, unlike Hegel, for Plato philosophy cannot begin to think without it (and geometry always remains as a check on philosophical tendencies to flight). This distinct relation to mathematics also distinguishes their "dialectics," and, in *Theory of the Subject*, the relation to mathematics that Badiou pursues underpins his "dialecticisation of the (structural) dialectic" of Hegel.

4. For example in the text *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic*, coincident with the early seminars given the collective title *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou and his collaborators Joel Bellasen and Louis Massot remark: "in Hegel's work there is a materialist (and dialectic) path that properly designates the rational kernel, the 'critical and revolutionary' dimension of his work. This path is counter-posed, in an internal way, with respect to the dialectic, by its idealist contrary. This contradiction is at work everywhere, at all times in the Hegelian dialectic" (81).

5. The height of mathematical consistency or rigor is the rational demonstration of its own point of inconsistency or incompleteness. This thought of being thinks the void-place of that which it is not—hence the event, which exposes that which is not but is in place to thought, whose form of inscription is the poem.

6. J. Derrida, "Preface: A time for farewells: Heidegger (read by) Hegel (read by) Malabou," in *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, preface by J. Derrida (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), xxv–xxvi. See, *inter alia*, B. Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003); J. Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); D. K. Keenan (ed.), *Hegel and Contemporary Continental Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY, 2004).

7. See A. Badiou, "Hegel in France," *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic*, 15. The essay is reprinted in *L'aventure de la philosophie française* (Paris: Le fabrique éditions, 2012), 57–64, with the title *Kojève. Hegel en France*. The English translation of this text, *The Adventure of French Philosophy*, trans. and intro. B. Bosteels (London: Verso, 2012), excises the name "Kojève."

8. Badiou, "Hegel in France," 15.

9. Ibid., 14.

10. Ibid., 15.

11. Although, we should note, Badiou by no means treats these various contemporaries as equal, dividing them in terms of a mobile friend/enemy distinction.

12. O. Feltham, *Alain Badiou: Live Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 40.

13. Ibid., 40.

14. This formalization, which Badiou comes back and forth to throughout, and through which he will give the political names, begins on TS 6 with: "There is A, and there is Ap (read: 'A as such' and 'A in another place,' namely, the place p distributed by the space of placement, or P). It is the same A twice named, twice placed. This will more than suffice for them to corrupt one another." Note: "What Hegel does not state clearly is that, fundamentally, the true initial contrary of the something, A, is not something else, not even the same A 'placed,' Ap. No, the true but camouflaged contrary of A is the space of placement P: it is that which delegates the index. The givenness of A as being itself split into:—its pure being, A—its being-placed, Ap" (TS 7).

15. "It is when the people erect their vision of the adversary as an internal figure of their own politics that they 'sublate' the antirepressive dependence, excluding themselves from any inclusion and proceeding to an affirmative scission" (TS 33).

16. Badiou marks this as the trajectory to follow, taking "things up from zero" after Hegel has been given his "proper salute."

17. In *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou had already argued that Hegel's use of the same term, "infinite," for the quantitative and qualitative introduced into his schema an indiscernibility for which he could not account.

18. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, analysis and foreword J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 24, 25, 26.

19. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1969), 240–45.

20. See Terry Pinkard's attempt to "save" Hegel against analytic desuetude, "Hegel's Philosophy of Mathematics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (1981), 452–464. See also Christopher Norris, who in this excerpt from his *Badiou's Being and Event: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2009), sounds, ironically, closer to Russell than to Badiou: "[Hegel] went out of his way to devalue or disparage mathematics as a discipline capable of finding out only such trivial since merely formal and content-less truths as belonged to its own, narrowly technical sphere. Thus mathematics was, he thought, intrinsically devoid of that world-disclosive and humanly revealing dimension that philosophy was able to provide through its grand-scale phenomenological project of thinking-back into the whole vast succession of world-historical creeds, cultures, political systems, intellectual developments and artistic forms or genres. On Hegel's account this was owing to the abstract or purely ratiocinative nature of mathematical thought, that is to say, its taking place in a realm at the greatest possible remove from those vivid actualities of human experience—all the way from 'primitive sense-certainty' to the highest forms of artistic expression or philosophical articulation—that made up the well-stocked narrative vista of his *Phenomenology of Mind*."

21. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 99.

22. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (trans. Giovanni), 572.

23. One should also advert here to several other important interventions by Badiou in this regard, perhaps most notably the essay "Philosophy and Mathematics" (C 93–112). Here Badiou notes that "the disjunction with mathematics" is "philosophically constitutive of romanticism" and that "Hegel deposed mathematics because he initiated a rivalry between it and philosophy with regard to the same concept, the infinite."

24. They are divided or linked by a reading of the clinamen.

25. "Nothing new occurs, except in terms of position in the language," Badiou asserts, then continues: "No, I find no fault with all this, except that I am not swayed by an order of things in which all thought is devoted to the inspection of that which subordinates it to the placement of an absence and which brings salvation for the subject only in the already-thereness of a star" (TS 109–10).

26. "An anti-dialectical Two, a Two without synthesis" as Badiou puts it in TC 109.

27. A. Badiou and Bruno Bosteels, "Can Change Be Thought? A Dialogue with Alain Badiou," in *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and its Conditions*, ed. Gabriel Riera (New York: SUNY Press, 1999), 237–261. Note: *confrontation*, not collusion, continuation, nor concatenation.

28. A. Badiou and L. Sedofsky, "Matters of Appearance," *Artforum International*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2006), 246–253, 322, 10.

29. The entire section "Hegel" (LW 141–52) is highly pertinent here.

30. For example: "the reverse of an apparent element is the largest element which, in appearing, is totally disjoint from this first element"; "Or, metaphorically, the reverse of p is the largest of the elements of the transcendental T having 'nothing in common' with p. This is indeed why the reverse serves to evaluate what, in appearing, is given in a situation as the negation of whatever element's intensity is evaluated by p. Because the reverse . . . combines the 'nothing in common' with maximality. This is, basically, maximal alterity." A. Badiou, *The Mathematics of the Transcendental*, trans. A. J. Bartlett and Alex Ling (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 179.

31. A. Badiou et al., "'We Need a Popular Discipline': Contemporary Politics and the Crisis of the Negative," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (2008), 645–659.

32. A. Badiou, "Affirmative Dialectics: From Logic to Anthropology," *The International Journal of Badiou Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2013), 1–13 (1).

33. See Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, *passim*.

34. Badiou, "Affirmative Dialectics," 1.

35. See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 80–107.

36. A. Badiou, *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. L. Burchill (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 83.

37. *Ibid.*, 85.

38. A. Badiou, "Language, Thought, Poetry," *Theoretical Writings*, trans. A. Toscano and R. Brassier (London: Continuum, 2004), 241. This line is from "Music and Letters."

TWO

The Good, the Bad, and the Indeterminate: Hegel and Badiou on the Dialectics of the Infinite

Tzuchien Tho

INTRODUCTION

A crucial aspect of the early twentieth-century French *épistémologie* tradition has been the critique of the “philosophy of X” trope that was already a standard way of treating the relation between philosophy and its neighboring disciplines since the eighteenth century. Leon Brunschvicg, in many ways a founding figure of this tradition, consciously played on the ambiguous terminology of a “*philosophie mathématique*” in contrast to a “*philosophie des mathématiques*” in order to develop the many stages of the historical intertwining of philosophy and mathematics in his 1912 *Les étapes de la philosophie mathématique*.¹ The criticism here, shared by contemporaries like Meyerson and Bachelard, was that the attempt to elaborate a conceptual edifice only available through the examination of the immanent, often implicit, sometimes even hidden and unconscious, *philosophy* within the practice and formal presentation of scientific inquiry did not reduce to a “foundational” account of science. Instead of a “philosophy of science” that laid claim to elaborating the foundations of science, the idea was to uncover a philosophical construction made possible by the internal theoretical dynamics of scientific inquiry. Hence the work of science would not be the mere production of a series of verifiable facts. Since these facts are only legible through the theoretical and methodological lenses that first allowed us to individuate, as a feature of these theories and methods, the proper domain of scientific objects, laws, and regu-

larities, the concepts immanent to scientific inquiry in turn create friction when they come into contact with earlier scientific concepts, *ad hoc* intuitions, and, not unsurprisingly, philosophical discourse.

This *épistémologie* tradition is no longer mainstream even in the Francophone world, having been replaced long ago by the unspoken consensus on naturalism. It is certainly not the context here to wonder if such an approach could have significantly transformed the activity of philosophy itself. That is, would the philosophical insight into the *immanent* working of science ultimately become all but indiscernible from an *extrinsic* philosophical evaluation of science in everything but style? It remains an open question whether the critique of the philosophical appropriation of science could not simply be better fulfilled by the modest limits prescribed by positivism and naturalism.

We begin, rather, by raising this question about *épistémologie* not only because Badiou consciously aligns himself in this conceptual tradition (albeit without being an *épistémologue* himself), but also reproduces, within his work, the same difficulties.² A fundamental feature of Badiou's mature philosophy is what he calls the theory of "conditions." The idea is that the temporality and actuality of philosophical thought is "conditioned" by truths which remain decidedly external to philosophy. Consonant with the dethroning of philosophy as the "queen of the sciences" but consciously avoiding reducing it to a "handmaiden," Badiou presents the task of philosophy as that of recognizing, generalizing, and insisting upon the truth-making "events" within the domains of science, politics, art, and love. These four conditions are domains where truths occur and philosophy fails in its task when it identifies itself with merely one domain or attempts to present some particular truth as identical with the content of philosophy. Of course even as Badiou attempts to articulate this dynamic of the external relationship between truth and philosophy, it becomes immediately clear that this external relationship itself is presented from the position of the philosopher. The immanent truths of science, politics, art, and love are conditions *for* philosophy, and the particular instantiations of these truths are narrated from the standpoint of Badiou's systematic philosophy.

The tension I point to here is perhaps a necessary tension for any philosophy that aims to be historically actual. Eschewing both "timeless wisdom" and "contemporary criticism" as philosophical goals, Badiou engages with this tension implied in a robust philosophical temporality. In order to do this however, Badiou must develop what we might call a "subtractive" philosophical methodology.

The term "subtraction" [*soustraction*] is Badiou's own coinage and is drawn from the many ways in which one might interpret the classical (Aristotelian) "aphaeresis" [ἀφαίρεσις], which could be variously translated "abstraction" or "subtraction."³ Within the Badiouian context, the term is crucially linked with his ontology of the pure multiple "sub-

tracted" from the "One." This is part and parcel to Badiou's reversal of the ontological priority of unity over multiplicity that has governed over Western metaphysics (with a few important exceptions) since Parmenides and Plato. My use of "subtraction" generalizes Badiou's ontological use by focusing on the problem of the temporality of philosophy. Here, the "subtraction from the One" represents merely one (albeit one important) instance of the subtractive method that I recognize as a necessary component of Badiou's mature systematic philosophy. Hence, a subtractive philosophical method is one that allows truth conditions to "subtract" concepts from their native philosophical articulation.

The idea of subtraction expresses the *prescription* that the externality of philosophy to truth should be articulated as the reconfiguration of philosophical concepts in the face of the historical eruption of a truth. The wave of republican revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, for instance, brought forth the eruption of the absolutization of equality as a political truth. Political philosophy found its traditional notions of the social order of the *polis*, spheres of social goods, and modes of legitimation deracinated from the received intuitions and the equilibrium of constraints meticulously crafted by earlier thinkers. The *interior* architecture of political philosophy was radically reorganized by the *exterior* eruption of political truth. Of course this convenient (political) example equivocates between description and prescription, but the point is clear that the relation between truth and philosophy is one of disruption. As such, a philosophy of subtraction indicates a general procedure where dominant philosophical concepts are deracinated from their habitual positions through the violent reconfiguring emergence of historical events.

A full exposition of the general method of subtraction cannot be completed here. Instead, in what follows I will provide a staging of this tension between philosophy and science by examining how the historical transformation of the concept of the infinite—a concept that has been historically shared by metaphysics, theology, and mathematics—provides a paradigm for the subtractive method in philosophy. Insofar as Badiou takes the mathematical revolution inaugurated by the generation of Dedekind and Cantor in the late nineteenth century as a key "condition" for his own systematic philosophy, the transformation of the concept of the infinite provides something of a paradigm for grasping the subtractive method. At the same stroke, Badiou will find in Hegel a natural interlocutor in the articulation of this philosophical transformation. Here Badiou's rejection of the infamous Hegelian infinite will be the occasional cause for a defense of the subtractive method, but the relationship between these two thinkers runs much deeper. For our purposes here, we will only examine how Badiou's refutation of Hegel provides the stage upon which to play out the transformation within philosophy that was introduced by the historical transformation of the mathematical infinite. In so doing, we provide a key instance for the concrete instantiation of

the method of subtraction within the systematic articulation of Badiou's philosophy.

HEGEL'S POISONOUS GIFT

Despite the obvious debt to many aspects of Hegel's philosophy, Badiou has maintained a strong anti-Hegelian position concerning the problem of the infinite, from his early article "La subversion infinitésimal" in 1968 to his systematic philosophy, conditioned by mathematical ontology, that commenced in the late 1980s around *L'Être et l'événement*.

A reductive version of this anti-Hegelianism can be described as a rejection of the Hegelian distinction between the "bad" and "good" infinite. Simply put, the "bad" infinite is the indefinite, a form of the infinite that relies on the interminable increase of a given magnitude, the expansion of an infinite series or simply the growth of a quantity by addition. To take the famous Zenonic problem of the division of a continuous line, it is obvious that an arbitrarily large number of divisions will not exhaust the continuum. By projecting the progressive Zenonic divisions toward a "final cut," we imagine that an "infinite" number of divisions will exhaust the continuum. This is, in brief, the underlying heuristic intuition behind the Newton-Leibniz calculus. For Hegel this bad or "spurious infinite" is "only the negation of the finite posited as real—as such it is the abstract, first negation: determined only as negative, the affirmation of the determinate being is lacking in it."⁴ In turn, the good infinite is one that is capable of sublating the negation of the finite posited in the bad infinite. This good infinite is the infinite of the *dynamic* of self-relation. That is, "The infinite . . . is essentially only a becoming, but a becoming now further determined by its moments."⁵ Although dialectical self-relation is an intuitive way to grasp the Hegelian infinite, it is important to underline that this infinite emerges as a dynamic because the good infinite is not a "thing" to be grasped from without. It is not static self-identity, but a dynamical *process* that takes the side of the negativity immanent to the identity of being and nothingness, or becoming. As such, this good infinite is rather the dynamical process of two movements of thought. These two movements are the internal contradiction of the quantum, defined as the determinate being of quantity. It suffices here to think of number as a paradigm for quantum.⁶ Numbers, according to Hegel, can get as great or as small as one wishes but maintain their nature as finite quantities insofar as they are arithmetically homogenous. The identity and unity of quantity thus relies on the negative (abstract) reality of the infinite as the negation of finitude. Hence, on the one hand, we can see the number *qua* quantum as a being that goes beyond itself through the negation of its immediate "value." This is the progression of quantity that allows us to qualify it as "indefinite." On the other hand, we see that

since the quantum can have such an indefinite progression, we also negate the “beyond” of this quantitative progression that is logically implicated in indefinite progression. That is, the quantitative progression immanent in the quantum implicates the quantitative bad infinite as an immanent feature of quantity itself. These two movements, what Hegel refers to as the “determined moments” of determinate being’s becoming, are key features of the dynamic that will eventually reveal the necessity of the good infinite. Hence, the “finite is not sublated by the infinite as by a power existing outside it; on the contrary, its infinity consists in sublating its own self.”⁷ Hence the traditional negative opposition between the finite and the infinite is transcended as the self-relation of determinate being.

Badiou’s rejection of this distinction concerns a critique of the dialectical maneuver that Hegel uses to sublimate quantity into quantum. This dialectical movement relies on the dynamical unity that transcends the opposition between the finite and infinite. Badiou’s point here is that the bad infinite only appears “bad” because of the background condition of traditional attempts to stretch the concept of the indefinite towards some notion of a *qualitatively* distinct infinite. That is, the bad infinite is bad because it relies merely on the negation of the finite and is insufficient in grounding the infinity that it purports to represent. Badiou’s rejection of this approach, the underlying claim of his 1968 “La subversion infinitesimal,” is that the infinite or the correlated infinitesimal was, outside of metaphoric or illusory instances, never a number or quantity. The purported insufficiency of the “bad infinite” can only be produced as a shadow of the clearly contradictory notion of the infinite as a totality or unity (i.e., the infinite quantity). For Badiou, Hegel resolves a false problem and offered mathematics, in Badiou’s words, a “poisoned gift” [*venimeux cadeau*].⁸ Hence, the problem is that Hegel relies on the dialectical teleology of unity not only to “diagnose” the alleged malady of the bad infinite in mathematics, but to impose its pre-given solution: the conceptual unity of dynamic reflexivity.

In Badiou’s rejection, we find more than a particular disagreement about the treatment of mathematics in Hegel. Badiou’s critique implies a larger problem concerning the teleological unity upon which the dialectical method itself relies. The correlation of determination and unity is what is at stake here. For Hegel, the mathematical indefinite *qua* infinite is merely abstract negation because it is incapable of attaining unity without transcending mere quantity. Badiou’s alternative in 1968 is to undo this unwarranted attachment to unity as the criterion of determination. Even without the help of modern mathematics, it is clear that the mathematical indefinite had served mathematicians for centuries in strict denial of a total-unity concept for the indefinite *qua* infinite. More than this, it is clear that the determination of the mathematical indefinite is more than merely abstract negation. With the advent of mathematical analysis in the

work of Descartes, the indefinite progression of quantities (numbers, magnitudes, extensions) has been shown to possess an internal structure that determines it in a way that casts Hegel's "logical" analysis as trivial. The behavior of continuous curves can be classified and described without reduction to determinate lines. Viewed retrospectively from modern mathematics, one cannot fault Hegel for the ignorance of the eventual Dedekind-Cantor revolution in real analysis and set theory. But it is important to note that this eventual development of the "actual infinite," discussed below, demonstrates the irrelevance of the distinction between bad and good infinite developed by Hegel. Much of Badiou's 1968 argument is an evaluation of the Hegelian distinction retrospectively from this modern standpoint. Nonetheless, even with generosity to Hegel, Badiou's argument remains cogent. It is only with the ignorance of *mathematical* project of the structural determination of the indefinite *qua* infinite that the bad infinite could be characterized as a *problem*. As we shall examine in more detail below, the history of mathematics demonstrates the cogency of concrete determination made on the basis of structure rather than on (either static or dynamic) unity.

The core of Badiou's rejection of Hegel has two important consequences in the former's development. The first concerns the nature of being and the second concerns the role of philosophy vis-à-vis its mathematical-ontological conditions. Although the notion of being as "inconsistent multiplicity" was not fully developed by Badiou until the period of *L'Être et l'événement* in the 1980s, the rejection of totalization as a theme can already be seen in numerous works of the 1960s and 1970s.⁹ What Badiou had already clarified, in the early rejection of the identity of determination and finitude, was that the rejection of the Hegelian correlation of identity and determination found an alternative in the theoretical development of the "inconsistent multiplicity" as a central concept of his later work. Though the syntax of set theory would be, starting from *L'Être et l'événement*, the discourse that renders inconsistent multiplicity determinate and consistent, Badiou, in the late 1960s, had already hinted at the importance of this formalistic alternative.

The second consequence of this rejection of Hegel concerns the larger question of the relation between mathematics and philosophy. Hegel's dialectical treatment of the mathematical infinite, despite any misgivings, is an attempt to synthesize diverse forms of rationality into a dynamic unity. Yet, there is no question that for Hegel, mathematics, as a function of the understanding, remains at a "lower" domain of rationality than reason itself. This is due to the logically deductive mode of mathematical demonstration which follows, for Hegel, "mechanically" from a limited set of given axioms. Hence, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel notes that, "[T]he evident character of this defective cognition of which mathematics is proud, and on which it plumes itself before philosophy, rests solely on the poverty of its purpose. . . . [T]his process of knowing pro-

ceeds on the surface, does not touch the thing itself, its essence or Notion, and therefore fails to comprehend it."¹⁰

Despite these limitations in the mathematical mode of thought, the understanding, it became clear to Hegel that something occurring in mathematics was nonetheless worth investigating. That is, for Hegel, mathematicians blindly groped their way into dialectics. What Hegel came to understand in his later editions of the *Science of Logic* was that the determinate relation of being to nothing, the passage to becoming, was expressed in the development of the Newton-Leibniz infinitesimal calculus. From the Newtonian "vanishing" magnitude of the infinitesimal, Hegel observes that,

These magnitudes have been defined as such that they are in their vanishing, not before their vanishing, for then they are finite magnitudes, or after their vanishing, for they are nothing. Against this pure notion it is objected and reiterated that such magnitudes are either something or nothing; that there is no intermediate state between being and non-being. . . . [I]t has been shown that being and nothing are, in fact, the same, or to use the same language as just quoted, that there is nothing which is not an intermediate state between being and nothing. It is to the adoption of the said determination, which understanding opposes, that mathematics owes its more brilliant successes.¹¹

Despite the limited, though successful, domain of mathematics as understanding, Hegel argues that reason would otherwise be empty if not for its elaboration through these various "lower" mediated moments. Hence, as a species of this teleological synthesis of reason's self-realization, the infinite is found, in mathematics, in a fragmented and insufficient state. It is only in the upward synthesis of quantity to quantum that the "insufficient" truth of the infinite is found. The natural "Badiouian" question for Hegel here is whether developments within mathematics itself would be able to reconfigure the state of the relation between mathematics and philosophy as he found it, in the early nineteenth century.

Badiou unfortunately does not directly address Hegel's division of thinking into the lower level of the understanding and the higher level of a reason. It is nonetheless important to underline that what Hegel calls the understanding is continuous in mathematical history. The Dedekind-Cantor revolution in mathematics would remain as much a function of the understanding as in the work of, say, Euclid. Nonetheless, mathematical thought has always been much more than its specific axiom-theorem mode of logical presentation. Hegel is clearly aware of this but faults mathematical cognition for separating the movement of mathematical demonstration from the object itself.¹² Hence insofar as this organization of the Hegelian system according to modes of reasoning orders different scientific disciplines and human practices, it is clear that the distinctions within the hierarchy and teleological dynamic are made according to the

limits of these disciplines and practices. Though spirit transcends its various constitutive moments, the moments are, by themselves, limited and distinct. The historical transformation of, say, mathematics can certainly enrich the unfolding of quantity and quantum. Such transformation can also concretize determinate being insofar as it unfolds the quantitative aspect of being. Nonetheless, any such transformation of the mathematical discipline will fail to either revise its place in the hierarchy of reason or indeed reorganize the hierarchy itself.

These two consequences that emerge from Badiou's specific rejection of the Hegelian treatment of the infinite extend to a more general anti-Hegelianism in Badiou; one which, I will argue, constitutes a *subtractive* alternative for the treatment of dialectical opposition. Hence despite the frequent positive references to Hegel, the consequences of this refutation concerning the question of the infinite build toward a pointed anti-Hegelianism. In what follows, I will argue that these two consequences extend toward a Badiouan conception of the dialectic central to his mature project of a mathematical ontology and build toward a "method" of subtraction.

THE INFINITE *QUA* INDEFINITE

Let us revisit the problem of the mathematical infinite with the aim of treating the distinction between determination and unity that was so crucial to Badiou's engagement with Hegel. The goal here is to demonstrate that the differing treatment of the infinite between Hegel and Badiou is due to a dispute over the relation between determination and unity. For Hegel, the mathematical infinite is bad precisely because its abstract determination is only due to its *mere* negation of the finite. It is hence conceptually limited as a mere abstract negation and any attempt to determine such an abstract determination results in an insufficiency. Badiou's alternative is to treat the infinite as an "incomplete" albeit concretely determined. This determination relies on the criterion of structure rather than that of unity. As such, the determination of the infinite can be made even if it fails to constitute a unity.

In order to shed light on Badiou's alternative to Hegel's treatment of the infinite, it is necessary to briefly reexamine the history of the mathematical infinite. It should first be clarified that the term "infinite" circulated throughout much of philosophical history in the guise of the pre-Socratic apeiron [*ἄπειρον*], the limitless or indefinite, within a wealth of different contexts and guises. In the so-called "Christian centuries," we encounter a qualitatively different notion: the infinite *qua* absolute in the conception of the other-worldly God. Nonetheless, we must state that, in the strictest terms, there has never been, at least not before the late nineteenth-century generation of Dedekind and Cantor, any concrete idea of

the “mathematical infinite.” There are two good reasons for this and each corresponds to a certain way of conceptualizing the infinite. To be clear, we are only speaking of the mathematical infinite rather than its meta-physical or theological cousins. The first reason for the inexistence of the mathematical infinite is that it is a contradiction in terms. This problem is simple enough. Any number assumed to be the “greatest” number, quantity, or magnitude can be added to. Any infinite number posited to be the greatest number will engender a contradiction. The second reason is that any approximation of the infinite will be insufficient. Here let us take the traditional Zenonic paradoxes of the mapping of discrete quantities onto a continuum. The exhaustion of the continuum by discrete subdivision terminates, as we now say, *at* infinity. Nonetheless, there is no such “final cut” and any attempt to subdivide a continuum will result only in a finite number of subdivisions. This is what Aristotle classically calls the “potential infinite.”¹³ Any arbitrarily large number greater than a specified arbitrarily large number will still be a finite number.

Notice that this second reason for the inexistence of the infinite characterizes the concept in question in a different way from the first. The impossibility to make the “final” division to exhaust the continuum allows us to define the infinite *as* indefinite. Let’s take what is sometimes called Euclid’s proof, from *Elements* IX proposition 20, for the infinite number of primes, a founding theorem for number theory.¹⁴ The proof states that for any determined list of primes, there will always be a greater prime number. Euclid’s argument is that the number of primes is not assignable. This is, at least for Euclid, not a proof for an “infinite” number of primes. To be clear, it is a proof that there is *no assignable number* of prime numbers.¹⁵ This theorem states, to use modern terminology, that there is no mapping of prime numbers onto a strictly finite set of numbers. We say then, at least for the Euclidian understanding, that there is an *indefinite* number of prime numbers.¹⁶

To call Euclid’s demonstration a proof for the infinite number of primes is inexact if not erroneous. All that is claimed is that for any given prime number there is another greater prime that can be produced. This conceptual dynamic of “for any x , there is a greater y ,” is part and parcel to the longstanding mathematical concept of the infinite *qua* indefinite. To be precise we can logically define this indefinite quantity as:

$$\forall x \exists y: Fx \rightarrow y > x \text{ where } Fx = x \text{ is finite and } x \text{ and } y \text{ are numbers.}$$

This definition of the indefinite expresses the “always more” notion for any arbitrarily large number. Inversely we could define an infinitesimal by reversing the inequality and define it as lesser than any assignably small number or quantity:

$$\forall x \exists y: Fx \rightarrow y < x \text{ where } Fx = x \text{ is finite and } x \text{ and } y \text{ are numbers.}$$

The notion of a “potential” infinite, coupled with the indefinite so defined, certainly played a powerful role in the development of mathematics from the seventeenth century onwards. Most notably, in the Newton-Leibniz infinitesimal calculus, the underlying idea, with strong resonances to the Zenonic paradoxes, was to provide a “fictional” mapping of the discrete onto the continuous. There were several modes to accomplish this underlying idea, but the essential one can be intuitively grasped in the seventeenth-century generalization of the quadrature of the circle commenced much earlier by Archimedes. The idea of describing a circle as an infinitely sided regular polygon goes back to Archimedes in the third century BCE. This long-standing tradition of quadrature formed the methodological basis of the Newton-Leibniz infinitesimal calculus. The idea here is that as the number of sides of the regular polygon approaches the infinite, the magnitude of each side will approach zero. Hence just before the magnitude reaches zero, it is of a negligible magnitude. The infinitesimal is a vanishing *fictional* quantity between the *very small* but nonetheless *finite* quantity and zero.

What is important for us here is that the innovators of the calculus from Leibniz to L’Hopital, D’Alembert, and Cauchy, constantly argued for the fictionality of the infinitesimal insofar as their methodology could be reductively understood in the Archimedean sense. Leibniz, for instance, argued that,

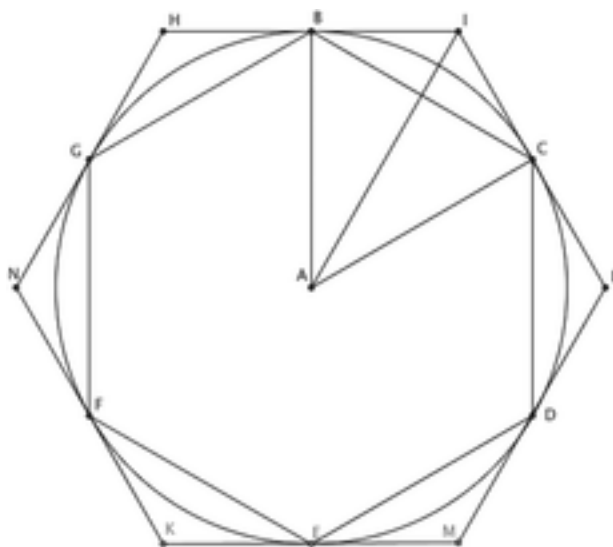


Figure 2.1.

For in the place of the infinitely small, we take quantities as great or as little as is necessary such that the error would be less than the given error such that it does not differ from the style of Archimedes except in the expressions, which is more direct in our method and more conforming with the art of invention.¹⁷

This reiterates the conscious distance taken by mathematicians against the existence of any actual mathematical infinite in the history of mathematics leading up to the nineteenth century. To put it rather reductively, there are only *actually* finite magnitudes, extensions, and quantities. Of course for any sufficiently large or small quantity, one can always present a larger or smaller quantity respectively. But any actually larger or smaller quantity will remain determinately finite.

With this understanding, we can advance a crucial claim. With the emergence of "Cantor's paradise," famously pronounced by Hilbert in 1925, there is still only a relative infinite.¹⁸ In the above we saw two reasons for the absence of the mathematical infinite. The first was based on contradiction and the second on indefiniteness. If we take the mathematical infinite to mean the "greatest" number or quantity, a notion that lands us in contradiction, then there has been, broadly speaking, no advance beyond this problem. The "greatest" number or quantity remains a contradiction. What we call "infinite," after the late nineteenth century, is advancement in the concept of the indefinite. This infinite is relative because what we call "infinite" is a relation constituted by mapping relations.

To explain the persistence of the infinite *qua* indefinite, we return to Zeno. The traditional Zenonic concept of the indefinite resulted from the impossibility of mapping the continuum to discrete divisions. The revolution brought forth by Dedekind and Cantor in the late nineteenth century was precisely that which allowed for a determinate mapping of this indefinite. The methodological revolution produced by Dedekind is the clarification of a structural path that has, in a sense, always accompanied mathematical practice. In the 1888 *Was sind und was sollen die Zahlen*, Dedekind's groundbreaking treatise on numbers and analysis, he argues that, "My own realm of thoughts, the totality S of things, which can be objects of my thought is infinite. For if s signifies an element of S , then the thought s' , that s can be object of my thought, is itself an element of S ."¹⁹ For this hypothetical realm of Dedekind's thoughts, for any thought s there is a thought *of* s (defined as s'), which is also a thought. Since for any s , there is an s' , there is a determinate one-to-one mapping of s to s' . This *relation* determines the infinity of Dedekind's thoughts. This constitutes an application for the definition of the infinite in the earlier proposition 64 of Dedekind's treatise: "A system S is said to be infinite when it is similar to a proper part of itself; in the contrary case S is said to be a finite system."²⁰

The point here is that a set S is infinite if there exists a bijective (one-to-one mapping) function of a proper subset of S on S . If this condition is not met, then S is finite. A set S is finite then if a proper subset of itself does not map onto S . In other words, a finite set of four objects has as a part of it, say a part of three objects, that does not map bijectively onto itself. This satisfies the idea that a proper part of something is strictly *lesser* than the whole. But Dedekind here starts with the infinite and defines the finite as a set that fails to meet the definition of the former.

The approach of Dedekind was then to objectify the relation of difference within the traditional Zenonic paradoxes. That is, the traditional negative limit of the concept of the infinite was the contradiction where a proper part of the totality is equal to itself. Take for instance, the set of natural numbers (0, 1, 2, etc.) and to map only the evens (0, 2, 4, etc.) or primes with it.

We have a complete bijective (one-to-one) mapping for each of the sets to each of these other sets even though obviously the even numbers and the primes are proper subsets of the natural numbers. This allows us to define the number of natural numbers as infinite. We might also map the primes to odd numbers. Since all prime numbers are odd but not all odd numbers are primes, we can, with the same procedure, determine the Dedekind infinity of odd numbers. Whereas this constituted indetermination for the Greeks, we find, in Dedekind, a foundational definition for both infinity and finitude that uses what was traditionally considered indetermination as determination. The indefinite is thus, in this sense, determinate.

For the present I only wish to point to the importance of this surprising construction. It presents a structural relationism precisely because it subtracts the relation from the *relata* at work. That is, the problem of the infinite was removed from the problem of whether those sets of *relata* are capable of handling the infinite relation traditionally conceived. The irony of the history of the infinite is that the infinite only constitutes an object when its status as a relation is subtracted from *relata*.

It may be an overstatement to simply claim that the first generation of set theoretical thinkers (Dedekind, Cantor, and Frege) *resolved* the Zenonic paradoxes. New iterations of problems and paradoxes like the König paradox emerged in the incorporation of such a new understanding. What is clear however is that this new epoch of modern mathematics replaced the infinite *qua* indefinite with the notion of the transfinite. In Cantorian methodology, the same process that took us from the count-

Natural	0	1	2	3	4	5	...
Even	0	2	4	6	8	10	...
Prime	2	3	5	7	11	13	...

able infinite to the first non-countable infinite, the power set function, will then take us into higher and higher orders of the infinite. Quite simply, the idea here is that if we have a set of n objects, we can make 2^n uniquely different sets of them. This operation (or proof) is what Russell was referring to (other than *Hamlet*) when he asserted that, "You have, in fact, a perfectly precise arithmetical proof that there are *fewer* things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in *our* philosophy."²¹ If n is infinite (like the naturals, evens, odds, or primes) then 2^n will be a strictly higher order of infinity. Clearly this definitively rejects any determination of the infinite as the "greatest" number. In turn, the infinities or transfinities are distinguished by the mapping relations between one order and the next.

We can then characterize this late nineteenth-century revolution in mathematics as an evolution of the notion of the indefinite. In an absolute sense, the Cantorian transfinite resembles the indefinite. Even if we are able to construct and distinguish a vast hierarchy of different orders of the infinite, there is still no absolutely greatest number or quantity. As such, it is not wrong to characterize these many orders of the transfinite with the traditional idea of the infinite *qua* indefinite. The specific difference here is that what we traditionally called the infinite, the impossible Zenonic mapping between the discrete and the continuous, has been made possible and definite within a determinate order of transfinite quantities. In other words, the traditional indefinite, the specific mapping of the discrete and the continuous, has become arithmetizable. Hence what occurred in the mathematical revolution of the late nineteenth century is the resolution of the problem of the indefinite by means of mappable structure and, in so doing, what is engendered is a *subtraction* of the finite qualification of numbers. That is, the revolution brought by Dedekind and Cantor now allows us to resolve not only the intra-mathematical problem of the mapping of the discretely to continua, but has also allowed us to demonstrate the different structures that distinguish different orders of the transfinite.

What occurred in the Dedekind-Cantorian revolution was the relativization of the universality of what is called the "Archimedean" property of numbers. We find this property defined in Euclid's *Elements* V, definition 4: "Magnitudes are said to have a ratio to one another which are capable, when multiplied, of exceeding one another."²² Indeed, we see the undoing of this property explicitly in Dedekind's definition of the infinite set. The historical success of this conception had to pass through many intermediate stages, from the Newton-Leibniz calculus to the Cauchy function, the Bolzano-Weierstrassian ε - δ limit, and Dedekind's real analysis. This was a complex historical process that resulted from the ongoing deracination of mathematics from geometrical intuitions, the increasing ease of purely formal modes of mathematical practice, and the shifting of mathematical concepts onto foundational issues. We cannot enter into further exposition of this crucial period of mathematical histo-

ry. Nonetheless what is of crucial importance is that the rise of the acceptance of actual infinities should be understood along the lines of a reconfiguration of the structural relations of the indefinite rather than the “greatest” number or quantity. The Cantorian paradise then should be understood as the transformation of relations, through the methodology of mapping, that designates a structural rather than qualitative determination in the conception of the distinction between the mathematical finite and infinite.

This discussion leads us to distinguish between quality and structure. Here we return to Hegel’s characterization of the bad infinite. As we have seen, the Dedekind-Cantor infinite remains conceptually indefinite in Hegel’s sense. The infinite *qua* transfinite remains insufficient to constitute a totality. Of course, the first order of countable or denumerable infinite, the number of the natural numbers considered above, \aleph_0 , is distinguished from a higher order of the indenumerable infinite, \aleph_1 . But neither \aleph_0 nor \aleph_1 are, by an enormous gap, the “greatest” number. The number \aleph_1 limits \aleph_0 by determining its quantitative structure. A structural distinction is made between the two quantities such as to determine each of these infinities, in the transfinite hierarchy, according to their mappings. There is thus a determinate structure immanent to the indefinite which we can legitimately call infinite without any *qualitative* subsumption of the indefinite into totality. The indefinite remains interminable and incomplete. It is not adequate to any notion of totalization. Nonetheless, each order of the transfinite remains definite according to their mappings. In this sense, the infinite *qua* indefinite is not an abstract negative determination in two senses. In the first, extrinsic, sense, the transfinite is not a mere negation of the finite because the contradictory existence of a “greatest number” is not a negation of a multitude of infinite numbers. In the second, intrinsic, sense, the infinite *qua* indefinite is not an abstract negative determination because the orders of the transfinite is produced out of the immanent distinctions within quantity. The transfinite results from the concrete mapping relations internal to the nature of quantity itself.

The argument from structure is essentially the one made by Badiou in “La subversion infinitesimal.” It is worth noting that the text also addresses the more mathematically and historically complex problem of infinitesimals, which does not make a great difference for our purposes here but adds another layer of complexity to what is basically the same point. I have taken the liberty to adjust the terminology and emphasize the structural point that Badiou raises polemically:

Hegel . . . only validated the rejection of the infinite-point in order to come to the help of a mathematics in search of foundations, and to give a poisonous gift of the “qualitative” relation. The abasement of multiplicity, the refusal of thinking the concepts of [mathematical] analysis

in a logic of marks . . . These objectives required the supremacy of quality and the reciprocal discrediting of algorithmic thought and the inscribed thought: structural thought.²³

We can thus reiterate here what is the heart of Badiou's rejection of the Hegelian infinite. The Hegelian reason for the distinction between the good and bad infinite was that the mathematical (bad) infinite *qua* indefinite could be not adequate to its own intention as the negation of finitude. What the indefinite projection required was in fact an "impossible" finite-infinite that would at once be the contradictory concept of a totality but also a negation of finitude. Badiou took up the history of mathematics to demonstrate an orthogonal path. The history of mathematical analysis since the time of the Newton-Leibniz calculus progressively enriched the internal structure of the indefinite. This structure aimed at the determination of the magnitudes, curves, number series, and the like, without the need for a stabilizing totality. In the work of Dedekind and Cantor, the revolution that took place within the late nineteenth century allowed mathematical analysis to resolve the traditional problem of the mapping of the discrete and continuous and thus opened the door to a relativization of Archimedian and non-Archimedian quantities. As we saw, the Dedekind infinite defined infinity through the bijection of a set with a proper part of itself. This was an impossible operation insofar as only Archimedean quantities were admitted. In a thoroughgoing revision of intuitions and definitions, an understanding of modern mathematics provides an antidote to Hegel's "poisonous gift." Here the indefinite *qua* infinite remains indefinite insofar as there remains no totality of number but this realm of the indefinite becomes determined by an intricate and rigorous architecture available through the methods of mapping.

Insofar as it is the concept of structure that governs the Dedekind-Cantor revolution in real analysis and set theory, there is no question that it is this very notion of structure that guides Badiou in his development of a mathematical ontology in *L'Être et l'événement*.

To defend this important connection between mathematical history and Badiou's mathematical ontology, we only need to look at his explicit remarks on Hegel in *L'Être et l'événement*. In Meditation 15 of *L'Être et l'événement* on Hegel, Badiou defends the basic argument he makes in "La subversion infinitesimal" within the context of his new ontological argument. But here Badiou makes an explicitly ontological argument on the basis of his refutation of Hegel. In maturation towards *L'Être et l'événement*, Badiou's criticism of the Hegelian distinction takes up a new and central role in his philosophy.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE INFINITE AND MATHEMATICAL ONTOLOGY

In order to evaluate the important use of the infinite as a structural concept in *L'Être et l'événement*, it is necessary to step into the difficult position of having to summarize the project of mathematical ontology that was first commenced in this text. As such, though a brief account is provided here, no attempt will be made to defend it.

As Badiou argues in *L'Être et l'événement*, we enter into the ontological problem by distinguishing between being-as-such and beings. The possibility of ontology is the possibility of finding a univocal medium to present this difference between being-as-such and being. Since any medium we have of treating being-as-such is a being, ontology itself is always implicated in the very thing from which we are attempting to distance ourselves. It might appear from the reflexivity of this question then that ontology (*qua* science of being-as-such) is impossible since ontology would always be an artifact of the reflexive falling back into a treatment of being *qua* consistent multiplicity. As such, ontology would be a discourse homogenous with beings rather than being-as-such. Badiou's central project in *L'Être et l'événement* is to turn to mathematical formalism in the framework of Zermelo-Frankel set theory in the attempt to provide a medium capable of *subtracting* from this reflexive entangling.

The general aim of *L'Être et l'événement* as a whole is to show that even though ontology *qua* ZF set theory (and its intra-theoretical objects, like sets, subsets, functions, etc.) remains that of *beings* rather than *being* itself, it is sufficient to undo the central reflexive quandary of ontology by presenting this very reflexivity on the surface of its formalization. That is, the ontological problem is grafted onto (or *sutured* to) the very starting point of the *formal syntax* of set theory: the void \emptyset . The void provides the starting point of ontology as set theory precisely because it is capable of operating on the reflexively irreducible and inoperable notion of being-itself *qua* inconsistent multiplicity. The idea is that when we think of being-as-such in the domain of beings, it will always exceed any determinate (logical, qualitative, or substantial) limits that constitutes being.

What results from this project is that the void \emptyset provides a gateway between being-as-such and beings. Beings are presented as consistent and structured multiplicities like cats, shoes, and stars. Hence when we treat this ontological gap between being-as-such and being, the "ungraspable" nature of being-as-such cannot but be presented as inconsistent multiplicity. But this qualification of being-as-such via inconsistency and the like is only a feature of the attempt to grasp being-as-such through the particular being of, say, ZF. The void \emptyset is adequate to this presentation precisely because it both presents the unity inherent in beings (this mark \emptyset is counted as one) as well as signals that nothing in particular is its referent. The void \emptyset is thus a means to employ the noth-

ing-in-particular for the construction of higher and more complex forms of unity. The void \emptyset thus provides the fulcrum that weighs the myriad of particular things against the non-presence of being-as-such. In this, the “particular existence” of set theoretical syntax becomes a univocal discourse where the ontological gap between being-as-such and beings can be dissected, analyzed, and rendered explicit. In short, if ontology is to be possible, it must be a theory of the void *qua* non-existent in being. In Badiou’s judgment, only ZF set theory is adequate to this task.

Since the systematic philosophy in *L’Être et l’événement* develops around mathematical ontology, it will be no surprise that Badiou’s rejection of Hegel in 1988 remains essentially the same as that of 1968. The problem remains that Hegel treats the mathematical infinite as that which emerges out of the externality between the indefinite progression of number and its unreachable “infinite.” In other words, the bad infinite is limited *extrinsically* by the impossibility of an infinite quantitative totality and *immanently* by its constitutive finitude. Here Badiou remarks, “After all, the bad infinity is bad due to the very same thing which makes it good in Hegelian terms: it does not break the ontological immanence of the one; better still, it derives from the latter. Its limited or finite character originates in its being solely defined locally, by the still-more of this already that is determinateness” (BE 165). We have already seen that what makes the Hegelian bad infinity “bad” is its inability to render a totality out of the negation of finitude. This is precisely because the traditional mathematical infinite remains, despite its indefinite progression, always a finite quantity composed of unities. Hegel’s solution was to make explicit the abstract negation of quantity by the concretizing move of developing the concept of the good infinite as dynamic self-relation. This in turn provides the concrete externality against which quantity is always limited in its progression. The quantitative progression can only be grounded by a qualitative movement immanent to the concept of the progression itself. In Badiou’s ontological language, the “indifferent” progression of quantity is, through the Hegelian good infinite, differentiated or determined by the qualitative synthesis. That is, what appeared as an indeterminate has achieved determination through the conceptualization of the negativity of self-relation that was the underlying and unrepresentable motor of indefinite quantitative progression.

Badiou remarks here that he has “no quarrel with there being a qualitative essence of quantity, but why name it ‘infinity?’” (BE 169). That is, even if we accept Hegel’s argument for the determination of the bad infinite, the good infinite *qua* quality that comes to “save” the bad infinite fails to be infinite at all. But Badiou’s refutation is more decisive and subtle than this. He argues, “In numerical proliferation there is no void because the exterior of the One is its interior, the pure law which causes the same-as-the-One to proliferate. . . . [i]ndifference renders illegitimate here any declaration that the essence of finite number, its numericity, is

infinite" (BE 169). This difficult and conceptually nested phrase echoes much of what we have been considering so far. Indefinite quantitative progression is to be understood here as indifferent insofar as it is the propagation (the quantitative progression) of the same (or non-different). The bad infinite is bad because the indefinite could never produce anything more than the same. It remains finite quantity. When Badiou says that the "exterior of the One" is the interior law of the indefinite, he is simply saying that the indefinite is defined as untotalizable. As such, there is no void in numerical proliferation because the void is that which generates difference through its count. Once counted, the void separates the counting itself from that which is counted. Concretely, the indefinite cannot be "counted as one."

How does Badiou's analysis of Hegel reflect on his own problem of quantity? For Badiou, quantity is "the indifference of difference" instead of the difference of indifference (BE 167). This has great ontological significance for Badiou because his ontological project necessarily depends on the specific character of reflexivity found in mathematics to generate an operable difference for treating the indifference of being-as-such. In order for ontology to be possible, we require a form of presentation capable of operating on the difference between being-as-such and being. The void provides this point of entry.

As we have already remarked above, the void provides the fulcrum for which what is indifferent (being-as-such) can be measured against difference (beings). A *something* is only some particular thing because it is different from any other (particular) thing. The void is a *nothing* for any ordered situation of difference or any world of particular things hence it in-exists or in-consists in any ordered configuration of difference. Ontology is possible because this nothing can be rendered a means to treat difference in its most transparent and univocal form. That is, in mathematics, the mark of the void \emptyset is differentiated as a sign or "name" of this indifference or "inconsistence" but is treated as a differentiated thing. Hence although there is, in Badiou's conception, in any situation, always a metaphorical void lurking at the edges, the specificity of the mathematical realm is the explicitness of this void treated as consistent being. For example, the void set $\{\emptyset\}$ is the set produced by the disjunction of any two disjoint sets follows from the fact that the void is subset of any given set. That is, where A and B are disjoint sets: $A \cap B = \emptyset$. It is through the void that difference is produced from indifference, a procedure that captures the very relation between being-as-such and being.

The void then, in order to play the role that it does, must occupy two different positions. The void, counted-as-one $\{\emptyset\}$, *presents* inconsistency at the same time as *constructing* consistency. When we speak of mathematics, we essentially map this double role back onto the mathematics itself. If mathematics maps the ontological gap between being-as-such and beings to inconsistent and consistent multiplicity, what happens

when this relation is mapped back onto the work-a-day objects of mathematical practice like magnitudes, quantities, and numbers? The result is that mathematical objects like numbers will be treated along the lines of the structured, consistent multiplicities that they are. Hence numbers, cats, or planets are not essentially different with respect to the ontological gap where the presentation of inconsistency via the void constitutes the means to represent the consistency of these particular things. Mathematical structure however constitutes the source of this very theorization of difference. In this, the proliferation of numbers is the very structure presented by the mathematization of the ontological gap. As such, the work-a-day realm of mathematical objects presents the unadorned map of the structure of multiplicity. In this, the “abstractness” of mathematical ontology is rendered at its most concrete. There is no void in numerical proliferation because the void is already an explicitly counted, consistent and structured multiple. These mathematical objects are indifferent to the differences that they map. Literally, mathematics is *not* different (*indifferent*) to ontology. If the void constitutes the bridging of the ontological gap (difference) between beings and being-as-such, it is, in mathematical discourse, already fused (*indifferent*).

From Badiou’s perspective we can say that the *indifference* of mathematical structure provides the *difference* of ontological structure. Hence the difficult reflexivity central to ontology traditionally conceived returns but it returns in a tractable way. Since mathematics provides the means of ascertaining ontological difference, this difference applies *indifferently* to the ontology of mathematical objects. Badiou’s mathematical ontology is thus far from a Pythagorean thesis that beings are really mathematical objects. It is rather the case that all beings, including mathematical objects, are to be ontologically thought from the basis of their ontological gap, the gap between inconsistent multiplicities and the consistent and structured multiple-units. Badiou’s aim is to clarify that only mathematical structure can fulfill this task of accounting for this concept of difference. When this same ontological process is reflected back onto the domain of quantity, it is not surprising that the ontic presentation of quantity is none other than the *indifference of difference*.

In brief, Badiou remarks that Hegel’s treatment of the quantitative infinite by the qualitative infinite is a “trick, an illusory scene of speculative theatre” (BE 169). If so, then Badiou’s exposition of mathematical ontology could have rightly discarded this brief excursus. Indeed it would have been sufficient for Badiou to note that he took a different direction than Hegel. The defense of the mathematical infinite *qua* untotally indefinable as the starting point of mathematical ontology would certainly have indicated the immense breach between the project pursued by Badiou and the systematic philosophy of Hegel. Nonetheless, at the end of this Meditation 15, Badiou saw fit to address not only the Hegelian treatment of the infinite but, more generally, the dialectical

method in general. Here Badiou states that, "In wishing to maintain the continuity of the dialectic right through the very chicanes of the pure multiple, and to make the entirety proceed from the point of being alone, Hegel cannot rejoin infinity. One cannot forever dispense with the second existential seal" (BE 170). In the interest of clarity, what Badiou means by the "first" existential seal is the distinction between pure inconsistent multiplicity and unity through the count of the void set. This "seals" pure multiplicity from "counted" multiplicity. The "second" existential seal is the distinction between denumerable infinity \aleph_0 and the first infinite set \aleph_1 that distinguishes between the traditional indefinite *qua* infinite and the arithmetization of the continuum \aleph_1 . Badiou's terminology of the "seals" here is not crucial for us. What is important is that the "second" seal provides us with the internal structure of the denumerable infinite such that it can be distinguished as *one* set. Of course, once the procedure for distinguishing the denumerable infinite from the infinite of the continuum, it follows that the same procedure can allow us to produce higher and higher infinities each of which can treat its lower order as a unity. This implies, in Badiou's understanding, that the "chicanes of the pure multiple" effectively break the continuity of the dialectic if not the very method itself.

Any reader of historical figures in philosophy makes appropriate space for the various authors to express thoughts that resulted from the historical contexts in which these figures wrote. Badiou's generosity to Hegel is not at issue here. What is at issue is the demarcation of a methodological difference. That is, for Badiou, the dialectical method fails to incorporate the pure multiple. In simple terms this reduces to the inoperable relation between dialectics and the pure multiple. The dialectical method simply cannot admit to such a form of multiplicity. If Hegel's treatment of the bad and good infinite demonstrates anything at all, it is that the demonstration of this attempt to provide an underlying unity is "poisonous" to any mathematical infinite.

It is again here necessary to ask why one cannot simply separate Hegel from Badiou. We can, of course, simply divorce the two in any discussion. Nonetheless, it is necessary to make clear how Badiou aims to replace the dialectical method with his own.

THE METHOD OF SUBTRACTION

If Badiou's decades-long engagement with the refutation of the Hegelian treatment of the infinite indicates anything, it is a question about the priority of multiplicity over unity. But to simply state this would be to present two different philosophers pursuing different visions of ontology. This would be at best anecdotally interesting. What is crucial in this relationship however is to show what Badiou and Hegel share is an ac-

tive involvement with this traditional dialectical domain of the finite, the indefinite, and the infinite. In the mature work of Badiou, we find a clear appreciation of the dialectical nature of this problem. His exposition of the problem of mathematical ontology and the refutation of Hegel in Meditation 15 of *L'Être et l'événement* demonstrate an incorporation of a dialectical mode of reasoning through the void, infinity, consistency, inconsistency, difference, and the like. Nonetheless, Badiou's rejection of Hegel is rooted in his rejection of the continuity of the dialectic. It is this discontinuity with respect to the dialectic that provides the proper lens to examine why it is so crucial for Badiou to address Hegel specifically on the problem of the infinite.

The short historical discussion on the indefinite and the infinite aimed at clarifying the surprising discontinuity between the modern Dedekind-Cantor transfinite and the traditional problem. The key to this is to underline that the Dedekind-Cantor transfinite remains, within the traditional problem, a presentation of the indefinite insofar as it presents a non-totalizable proliferation of hierarchies of infinity. Rather than a conceptual continuity, however, it signals the abandonment of the traditional problem of the infinite such that the indefinite nature of the transfinite is no longer relevant to the issue. This abandonment of theoretical and intuitive bases for working on the infinite, I argue, was already a feature of the development of mathematical analysis and function theory about a century before Dedekind and Cantor. That is, the indefinitely large or small was absorbed into the project for investigating the internal structure of mathematical objects by means of mapping. Of course, it was for the generation of Dedekind and Cantor to mark a decisive break with the lingering methods and intuitions of the past by producing the foundational theorems to eventual developments of real analysis, the transfinite, and set theory.

This account of the transformation of the mathematical infinite provides a key instance of what Badiou calls "subtractive thought." Subtraction relies on the deracination of dialectic opposition from its traditional ground. It is, as he says elsewhere, "the affirmative part of negation."²⁴ In what we have examined here, the Dedekind infinite is perhaps the clearest example of such a deracination. One takes the traditional statement of the "impossibility" of the infinite as its very definition and re-employs it to construct a new account of finitude. Far from the traditional dialectical method of continuity, synthesis, and unity, we have here discontinuity, disjunction, and division.

Badiou's exposition of mathematical ontology is perhaps the very paradigm of subtraction as a mode of thought. The turn to the mathematical formalism of ZF and the crucial use of the void \emptyset provides the means to deracinate the traditional metaphysical and dialectical reflexivity of ontology without resolving them on those grounds. It is important here to note that subtraction is not abstraction. We are not dealing with the ab-

straction of some features by the suppression of others. Rather subtraction is the displacement of the grounds within which certain distinctions constitute dialectical opposition. In ontological terms, the traditional opposition between the one and the multiple, and the motor that generates their contradiction, consistency, and inconsistency, is displaced onto the syntax of ZF set theory. As such, mathematical formalization is not, for ontology, a mere instrument for thought. Formalization, at least for ontology, is in this account the subtractive act itself.

The larger theme of subtraction in Badiou is more often linked with the subjective pole of his work. It is, for example, in the chapter "On subtraction" in *Conditions*, "the act par excellence, the act of a truth, and names four (subjective) figures of subtraction: the undecidable, the indiscernable, the generic and unnameable" (C 113). I shall leave these larger questions for another occasion. All I wish to indicate here is the distinctiveness of the alternative that Badiou develops for dialectics.

It is thus through the lens of subtraction that we grasp the importance of Badiou's rejection of Hegel's treatment of the infinite. The problem is not simply that one insists on the primacy of multiplicity and the other does not. It is also not simply that one allows modern mathematics to reinvent the conditions of philosophical practice and the other does not. This decades-long engagement of Badiou with Hegel hence constitutes an evolving conception of the place of dialectics within his thought. That is, across the decades, what Badiou has consistently developed was a methodology that would replace dialectics with a method of subtraction.

NOTES

1. Leon Brunschvicg, *Les étapes de la philosophie mathématique* (Paris: A. Blanchard, 1993), 5–6.

2. Cf. Alain Badiou, "The Adventure of French Philosophy," *New Left Review* 35 (September–October 2005).

3. Aristotle, 1077b17–24; Cf. John J. Cleary, "On the terminology of 'abstraction' in Aristotle," *Phronesis* 30, 13–45. Badiou makes a similar distinction between subtraction and ex-traction in "On Subtraction," C, 114.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 149.

5. *Ibid.*, 148.

6. Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic: Being part one of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 149.

7. *Science of Logic*, 145–6.

8. Alain Badiou, "La subversion infinitesimal," *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, Vol. 9 (Summer 1968), 135.

9. Cf. Alain Badiou, "Marque et manque: à propos de zero," *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, Vol. 10 (Winter 1969); *Le noyau rationnel de la dialectique Hegelienne*, with Joel Bellassen and Louis Mossot (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1978).

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 25–26.

11. *Science of Logic*, 104–105.

12. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 24.

13. Aristotle, 206A18–19.
14. Euclid, *Elements*, trans. Thomas L. Heath (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2007), 227.
15. *Ibid.*, 227.
16. This example was chosen partly because it was also used by Badiou himself in the preface to *Logiques des Mondes* to speak about the historical embedding of structural determination in the development of algebra. I do not enter into the details of this here but my general argument here is an extension and generalization of this idea. See LM, 11.
17. W. Leibniz, Letter to Pinson 29 August 1701, A I 20, 290. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Darmstadt and Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–), Series I, Volume 20, article 290.
18. Cf. David Hilbert, “On the Infinite,” in *Philosophy of Mathematics*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul Benacerraf and Hilary Putnam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 191.
19. Richard Dedekind, “The Nature and Meaning of Numbers,” in *Essays on the Theory of Numbers*, trans. W. W. Beman (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 64.
20. *Ibid.*, 63.
21. Bertrand Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” in *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901–1950*, ed. Robert Charles Marsh (New York: Routledge, 2004), 260.
22. *Elements*, 99.
23. Badiou, “La subversion infinitesimal,” 135–136 [Author’s translation].
24. Alain Badiou, “Destruction, Negation, Subtraction: On Pier Paolo Pasolini,” *Lacanian Ink*, online, accessed 30 August 2014, <http://www.lacan.com/badpas.htm>.

THREE

Badiou *contra* Hegel: The Materialist Dialectic Against the Myth of the Whole

Adriel M. Trott

G. W. F. Hegel is notoriously known as the thinker whom continentally-minded political philosophers recoil from criticizing for fear that the tentacles of the Hegelian dialectic would reach out and reincorporate them and their criticisms into itself. Such dialectical totalizing would affirm that Hegel was right all along, thus requiring the same critics to acknowledge their begrudging allegiance. The fabled quip from Maurice Blanchot that Nietzsche clearly hated Hegel because he never said a word about him betrays our collective temptation to quietism in the face of Hegel. In the mid-twentieth century, Theodor Adorno in his *Negative Dialectics* specifically criticizes Hegel for the ethical consequences of maintaining the reality of the whole over the possibility of diverse multiplicity. This position, Adorno argues, requires Hegel to employ a certain violence whereby the dialectic allows him to articulate in concepts what remains diverse and “non-reconciled” in material reality and, in doing so, to suppress the differences that are not identical to thought.¹ In the wake of Adorno’s insight, many twentieth-century continental philosophers, left without a reasoned rebuttal to Hegel, were willing to take Adorno’s unspoken charge: if Hegel is right, I would rather be wrong. Such a concession Alain Badiou is not willing to make. For Badiou, Hegel’s whole is not only morally and politically unjust; after Cantor, Badiou concludes, the whole is not. That it is not shows that any claim to have achieved totality is false and irretrievably so because a totality of all that exists is impos-

sible to maintain. And so, as the champion of the whole, Hegel could be called not just Badiou's principal adversary but also his primary target.

And yet Badiou takes up a dialectical method, situating himself in the same philosophical lineage as Hegel. As for Hegel, Badiou uses the dialectic to think the relation between the one and the many, difference and identity. In *Being and Event*, Badiou affirms the multiple as ontologically basic—what is, is multiple—while arguing that ontology, being *qua* unity, presents what is as one. Furthermore, in *Being and Event* and in *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, Badiou champions truths, especially political truths, as universal by affirming that the world is one. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou affirms the multiplicity of worlds seen in terms not of the being of the world but in its multiple appearing.² But Badiou denies that the dialectical relation between multiplicity and differentiation, on the one hand, and unity and identity, on the other, is to be finally resolved into one non-contradictory whole, as it is for Hegel for whom the end of the dialectic really is the end of the dialectic. For Badiou, the dialectic is to be supplemented by an “aleatory third term”: subject-truths.”³

Arguing from post-Cantorian set theory that there is no whole, Badiou rejects the Hegelian dialectic, which, driven by negation, aims toward sufficient differentiation so all things properly differentiated can be properly included in the whole. For Hegel, this fully differentiated whole allows “the true infinite” to find itself in the whole allowing the whole to show its difference from finite things as well as showing its complete identity with itself.⁴ This is another way of saying that the infinite can be circumscribed as the whole, or that everything that Hegel's dialectic confronts, even what appears to be different from it, can be appropriated by it, which is to say, interiorized.⁵ As interiorized, the whole becomes fully totalized, thus completing the dialectic by bringing its work to a close. Badiou perpetuates the dialectic by making contradiction, not identity, the driver of his dialectic, producing a divergent rather than convergent dialectic.⁶ Not that being is a contradiction, but that the effort to speak of it as whole results in contradiction.⁷ Badiou's dialectic attempts to follow the separating moments of what is driven apart on pain of contradiction. By contrast, while Hegel affirms contradiction and seems to privilege negation, his speculative dialectic thinks the identity of identity and contradiction; Hegel thus supposes he can resolve the contradiction into a whole resulting in “a circular completion.”⁸

As long as there is a whole, as long as the true infinite finds its place as the whole subsuming all things within it while remaining distinct from them, the Hegelian dialectic can achieve its absolute identity by resting in itself (with all the theological resonances of such a goal). This resting is the de-dialecticizing of the dialectic, the reconciling of all difference into ultimate identity in a whole through negation, that Badiou accuses Hegel of seeking. Hegel's dialectic affirms completeness and tries to develop ways of reconciling inconsistencies. For Badiou and post-Cantorian set

theory, generally, the completeness cannot be achieved; it is logically impossible. Following Gödel, Badiou avers the disjunction between completeness and consistency. He aims to disrupt the project of speaking consistently of all that is. Thus, because everything cannot be interiorized, Badiou can locate a position beyond what is taken to be the whole. In this way, Badiou strives to separate from what is said to be to find a place of truth that is not graspable by ontology, which purports to speak of being *qua* being. Defenders of Hegel might object that Hegel's dialectic does not interiorize as completely as Badiou accuses it of doing, given Hegel's language in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that "ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era. Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined . . ." ⁹ But Badiou's argument shows that while Hegel might want to poeticize a whole new beginning, the logic of his dialectic of the true infinite will not permit him any position outside of the whole.

In this essay, I will briefly summarize Badiou's argument that post-Cantorian set theory shows the whole to be impossible. Then, I will show how the outright rejection of the whole leads Badiou to form a dialectics driven by subtraction in contrast to Hegelian negation. Finally, I will explore the political implications of Badiou's dialectic in contrast to the Hegelian dialectic.

UNIVERSALITY WITHOUT TOTALITY: THERE IS NO ONE

To say that the whole is false is to say that the one is not. This is the case both at the level of what appear to be individuals—that the individual is not one—and the collective of all things—that it is not complete. Individuals are not one but a result of an operation that produces a multiplicity as a unity. ¹⁰ I as well as other contributors to this volume have rehearsed Badiou's account of the relation between the multiple and the operation that produces the one elsewhere, so I will not reproduce the argument here. ¹¹ What is important for our purposes is that Badiou denies the unity of each and of all. That is to say, individual ontological ones or unities are not the only wholes that are not. There is similarly the inexistence of the whole of all of those things, which is to say, the unity of all things does not exist. There is no whole of everything, no possibility of totality. In ZFC set theoretical terms (Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory with the axiom of choice), there is no set of all sets.

The set of all sets is shown to be impossible by considering the implications of the existence of the negative reflexive set. ¹² In order for there to be a whole, the set of all sets, the mathematical concept of the whole, would have to count itself in the set. Hegel's dialectic is an effort to develop a method for including the whole of all the sets in the set of all sets. Recognizing that this whole continues to exceed itself and that no

process of a regress that continues to include the count in the set of the counted can capture that excess, Hegel constructs a dialectic that attempts to account for its excess by the process of negation that puts the point of excess in relation to the other parts and to the whole. This thinking leads him to posit that Spirit as the subject—the operation of counting or thinking—is also what is counted or thought. So the complete identity that also admits difference is achieved by fully differentiating the subject so that the subject can be considered both completely identical to and yet distinct from what it thinks or counts. Hegel hinges his success on the idea that the relation between substance and subject, or the idea and the material, could be fully articulated because of its self-negating determinate symmetry. But what Hegel cannot account for is the self-negating reflexive multiple that no negation can properly integrate into the whole—this is the set of Russell's paradox.

Badiou exploits Russell's paradox, that is, the set of all sets that are not elements of themselves cannot be determined, to show that totality cannot be secured. The problem is that when the set of all sets that are not included in themselves is itself not included in the set, it is then a member of the set. But when the set of all sets that are not themselves included in themselves is itself included, then it is not properly (i.e., according to the definition) a member of the set. Inconsistency results either way. The problem cannot be avoided just by refusing to determine the place of the negative self-reflexive set within this set because then the set would be incomplete. Any proposition that refers to the totality of propositions, including itself, is shown to be prohibited by Russell's paradox because such a totality would be inconsistent. Badiou insists on the ontological implication of Russell's paradox, whose self-referential set shows, as Badiou concludes, "Therefore, the Whole has no being."¹³ For Badiou, then, Russell's paradox is not just a logical difficulty, but it also is an ontological theorem.¹⁴

By asserting the ontological significance of Russell's paradox, Badiou challenges Hegel's claim that the whole can maintain its wholeness by its capacity for determinate negation. Hegel cannot account for the whole that negatively refers to itself. Russell's paradox points directly to the problem of the self-negating reflexive whole: it remains consistent only as long as it is incomplete, but becomes inconsistent at the point of completion. It is in this gap between the complete and the consistent outcomes of this set that Badiou situates his meta-ontological project, ultimately producing out of it the limits of ontology and the possibility of truth and, with it, a true dialectic that allows for a real outside.¹⁵

BADIOU'S MATERIALIST DIALECTICS AGAINST HEGEL'S IDEALIST DIALECTICS

Once the impossibility of the whole has been demonstrated, a new possibility of dialectical thinking becomes possible. For Hegel, the dialectic is idealist because being is unified and identical, capable of a totality. Such a totality must be achieved in thought. Badiou agrees with Hegel on the identity of being and thought, but, for Hegel, this identity leads to a totality.¹⁶ This totality is an interiorizing totality, whereby any outside is only posited in the effort to achieve a better differentiated whole, not in any way that produces a true resistance to the posited totality.¹⁷ Hegel's dialectic is propelled by the "global interiorization," which includes even its own reference and proclaims, "There is nothing but the Whole."¹⁸ Badiou's theory of world(s), both the infinity of localizable sites of appearing in *Logics of Worlds* and the political truth procedure of the universal as one world in *Being and Event* and *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, rests on the counterclaim that "There is no Whole."¹⁹

In *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou explains how the synthesis that names the two fusing into one is idealist because the one that results from the fusing is an idea (but not what Badiou will later call in *Being and Event* a truth) in both the abstract synthesis of abstract negation and the determinate synthesis of determinate negation. As Badiou explains, the thesis of all major idealisms is "that there are indeed two regions of being," noteworthy because idealisms thus assert the whole and a possible totality, while accomplishing this whole by holding two worlds apart.²⁰ Materialism moves from the unity of being to its division into two because, while one may try to start with the one of material, once it is named, "you instantly obtain the multiple."²¹ Hegelian idealism aims to return this multiple to a unity by deciding on behalf of one side of the two regions of being: the name, the idea, which idealism can then both fully differentiate and fully unite. Hegel's dialectic then works to continue to return the multiplicity to a unity, a better unity, a more fulfilled and developed unity, but nonetheless, a unity that decides in favor of the idea rather than the material. This better unity, one that is able to refer to itself in a way that includes self-reference within itself, requires a relation to the idea, but not to the material. Badiou writes, "Hegel is there to signal to us that the idea will do, in terms of the One."²²

The difference between the synthesis-driven dialectic of Hegel and the subtraction-driven dialectic of Badiou becomes evident in Badiou's explanation of the historical development of his own view of the dialectic, according to the "ideological struggle" over whether "one divides into two or two fuses into one."²³ Badiou explains in a 2011 interview with Tzuchien Tho that synthesis—"two fuses into one"—leads to idealism while division—"one divides into two"—leads to materialism. Badiou explains to Tho that he had thought the dialectic in this way in the 1970s

(in *Theory of the Subject*) when he did not yet have a “path” or a mechanism for thinking division in a way that held together multiplicity and unity without totalizing.²⁴ Subtraction becomes that new path in *Being and Event*, a path that is articulated in the event. The event is the rupture from the situation that presents what constitutively could not be present before and, in this sense, is subtraction.

Subtraction or the break from what is is possible because of the inexistence of the whole. Because the whole is not, a process of showing the point of its disruption is possible; that process is subtraction. This appearing of what is not included in the totality indicates a certain arbitrariness to calling this process subtraction, since the neglected part is indeed added. But it is not merely added to or properly differentiated within the totality, as if that would finally make it truly total. The event may include more, but it does not achieve a complete whole. No amount of addition will overcome the Hegelian problems of achieving the whole through negation. Subtraction, the separation from what is considered total, occurs at the point where the lie of the system’s capacity to be total, to count all who are included, is revealed. Subtraction separates from the posited whole and, unlike negation, it posits a real point outside of the structure of the given order, whether of language, politics, or set theoretical mathematics. This real outside, the site of the truth and the event, is not produced by being and the order of being, as it is for Hegel, but disrupts that order from a local site, making evident the falsity of the claim to totality. From this point, the subject of the event does not merely reconfigure as a new totality, but, as Badiou describes the truth procedure of politics, it aims to perform the universal. In this way, Badiou’s materialist dialectic is unique and marks a break from Marxist materialist dialectics, because with the absolute rejection of the whole, Badiou posits the possibility of a break with being and with the order of being.²⁵ New political possibilities are possible because there can be a break from what is.

Articulating the appearing of this break is the task of *Logics of Worlds*, where the language of subtraction falls out, but the divergent dialectic remains. What happens in *Logics of Worlds* is not subtraction, but a separation from what is. This breaking or separation runs consistently through Badiou’s work from *Theory of the Subject* to *Logics of Worlds*. In *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou argues that the contradiction between the One and the Two motivates the dialectic, both the materialist and idealist dialectics. The materialist like the idealist acknowledges “that we must distinguish thought from sensible being.”²⁶ As Badiou explains it, in order to affirm the unity of being, as the materialist does, she must affirm two names and two orders of the real. According to Badiou, “Under the name materialism we understand two perfectly contradictory theses: One states that there is the One, the other that the One precedes the Other, and thus that there is the Two.”²⁷ The materialist dialectic affirms that yes, there is only one region of being. But by having to thus affirm the unity of being, the

materialist splits the region by describing its order and thus the materialist affirms that, yes, there are two regions of being. So the contradiction that drives the materialist dialectic is that being is material and one—"There is only one world"—and that being is two since being can be described as material. In order to maintain this position, Badiou explains, the materialist must split the world into two. To name the one realm of being—material—and to name another realm of being—the name or idea—are needed. This other realm is ontology, the discourse on being *qua* being. The materialist is forced into this multiplicity in order to defend her position against the idealist.

What follows for the materialist is not that there are two realms of being, but that there is a realm of being and a realm of the order of being, as Badiou describes it in *Being and Event*. In *Logics of Worlds*, there is not only being, but the appearing of being that the materialist dialectic articulates. For Badiou, the way of speaking of the order of being is understood through mathematics and ZFC set theory, which is to say that being *qua* being already involves an order—a *logos*, a way in which being is taken up—and that it is best articulated or ordered mathematically, and when Badiou uses category theory to speak of the appearing of being, he is saying that there is a coding of the differences of appearing.²⁸ Because Badiou aims to show that there is a possibly different and new situation for bodies and their names, he posits that there is truth outside of that situation: "The materialist dialectic says: 'There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths.'"²⁹ *Logics of Worlds* articulates the appearance of those truths.³⁰ Together, *Logics of Worlds* and *Being and Event* fill out the divergent dialectic of Badiou's dialectical materialism: there is appearing that is neither reducible to nor disconnected from the order of being, ontology, a *logos* of being. What escapes, what appears in the incommensurability between them where diagonalization occurs, is truth. Badiou's goal is not to drive appearance and being together and reconcile them, but to facilitate a real possibility of truth in a break from being and the order of being and its appearing. Such a truth is actually what unifies, as Badiou writes in *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, "Truths, and truths alone, unify worlds."³¹

For Badiou, ontology, the task of articulating being, breaks down in its effort to speak of all that is. To reach truth, then, an exterior that is left out of the articulation of being must be acknowledged. In *Logics of Worlds*, where Badiou articulates the appearing of the evental within the order of appearing, the same disruption occurs:

"What has no place to be" should be taken in both possible senses; as that which, according to the transcendental law of the world (or of the appearing of beings), should not be; but also as that which subtracts itself (out of place) from the world localization of multiplicities, from the place of being, in other words, from being-there.³²

Badiou's use of the language of subtraction here binds the accounts of the logic of appearing and the order of being. Just as the order of being is never complete, there is similarly that which "should not be" in the order of appearing, "what has no place to be," and yet whose non-appearing has a logic. Subtraction functions for Badiou's dialectic, and consequently, his politics, to accomplish the appearing of what does not appear and the disruption in the order of what is in such a way that resists idealist unity and enables material change by being rooted in a local site. Matter precedes thought, Badiou argues, because in the process of the production of knowledge about what is, thought falls short of what is, and it is in this sense that, within the dialectic, thought becomes the "vanishing term from which it follows that there is only matter."³³ Badiou's dialectical materialism affirms that philosophy has an outside; philosophy has conditions upon which it rests.³⁴ Hegel's dialectic, by contrast, which purports to accomplish a sublation toward a greater unity driven by negation, strives toward greater differentiation but with no possibility for escaping the whole. Negation aims to articulate the whole in all its elements, yet no amount of negation will achieve the integrated whole it purports to achieve because the whole cannot be. Concluding his section on Hegel in *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou writes:

No, the phenomenal world does not "raise itself" to any realm whatsoever, its "varied being-there" has no separate subsistence which would amount to its negative effectuation. Existence stems solely from the contingent logic of a world which nothing sublates, and in which—in the guise of the reverse—negation appears as pure exteriority.³⁵

In contrast to Hegel, Badiou's sense of negation here "in the guise of the reverse," which is Badiou's language for thinking the appearance of what does not yet appear, can achieve a real outside. For Hegel, determinate negation grounds the whole by producing an outside in relation to which the inside determines itself and in so doing incorporates that outside into the whole. But Badiou's dialectical materialism cannot be conceived as being generated by Hegel's dialectical idealism. It is not just another outside that Hegel produces so that Hegel can exceed himself and his system through determinate negation and thus continue to affirm the consistency of totality. Hegel's dialectic can neither produce Badiou's position nor fold it back into the Hegelian system. Relying on negation, Hegel's dialectic aims to make everything commensurable, that is, the myth of totality arises. But by demonstrating the incommensurability of totality, Badiou positions himself in an incommensurable relationship with the view that all things are, eventually at least, commensurable, that is, Badiou positions himself as incommensurable with Hegel. The world of the commensurable can only negate what is commensurable with it and only thereby produce its outside. But it cannot produce the incommensurable. That is what it is to be incommensurable! Badiou's formalist

ontology shatters the logic of Hegel's generative effort and claims that it cannot in fact do what it claims to do—always produce and reincorporate its outside—precisely because the whole that Hegel's project assumes and requires cannot be. Hegel's account precisely fails because the commensurable cannot be related to the incommensurable and thus there is no totality. And thus, Hegel's account too is not able to produce Badiou's position with which it is incommensurable. With this challenge to Hegel's totality, Badiou shows that an outside, which disrupts the whole rather than being produced and eventually re-inscribed in it, is possible.

Confronting Hegel with Badiou shows how Badiou's dialectical project that begins in *Theory of the Subject* with the account of the one and the two, matter and idea, becomes triangulated with the work of *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*. In *Being and Event*, Badiou argues that ontology cannot achieve an account of the whole. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou articulates a logic of appearing, a phenomeno-logy, which neither can be mapped perfectly onto the ontology nor can it achieve a totality.³⁶ The divergent dialectic separates in such a way that it gives rise to a subject faithful to a truth that occurs between ontology and phenomenology and locally situated within the worlds of appearing and the situations of being. As Badiou writes:

It is now clear to me that the dialectical thinking of a singular subject presupposes the knowledge of what an efficacious body is, and of what a local and material excess with regard to the bodies-languages system might be. In short, it presupposes mastery not only of the ontology of truths, but of what makes truths appear in a world, the style of their deployment; the starkness of their imposition on the laws of what locally surrounds them; everything whose existence is summed up by the term "subject," once its syntax is that of exception.³⁷

In his translation of Plato's *Republic*, Badiou explains that dialectic establishes the link between the philosophical Idea and the political thought-practice. If we take Plato's dialectic as operating between being and appearing, between the thing itself and the many things, between definitions of virtues that can only affirm that virtue is good and definitions that articulate some specific way of being good, then the dialectic could be said with Badiou to be between ontology, as what is, and appearing, as what differentiates itself in multiple worlds. Ontology as the order of being and phenomenology as the order of appearing "partake" in the true but they are not the Truth. As Badiou writes in his translation of Plato's *Republic*, "They do not get at everything."³⁸ "Truth itself," which is Badiou's translation of the Good, "however, is not of the order of that which is exposed to thought, for it is the sublation of that order, thus being accorded a distinct rank in terms of both its precedence and its power."³⁹ In articulating the dialectic between ontological claims, claims about being that for Badiou always fall short of encapsulating all of be-

ing, and phenomenological claims, claims about what appears as always appearing in a local situation, Badiou shows how the dialectic must move between in an effort to articulate the True or the Good. It is in this light that we can understand Badiou's encapsulation of his relationship with Hegel:

[W]e share with Hegel a conviction about the identity of being and thought. But for us this identity is a local occurrence and not a totalized result. We also share with Hegel the conviction regarding a universality of the True. But for us this universality is guaranteed by the singularity of truth-events, and not by the view that the Whole is the history of its immanent reflection.⁴⁰

The singularity of truth-events as the flashpoint of the universal—not the totality formed in history's reflection on itself—is what makes access to the true for Badiou dialectically situated between ontology and phenomenology, between being and beings, between the philosophical and the political.

THE RADICAL EMANCIPATORY POLITICS OF MATERIALIST DIALECTICS

A politics that works on Hegelian terms and seeks sublation depends upon the existence of the whole and covers over the contradictions that remain at work within it. Because Hegel's political position is dialectical, Badiou does not consider it constructivist, as representative theories of the state are, and yet, since he makes the same claims to wholeness, Hegel in his politics approaches the same problems that representative or constructivist political forms do when they insist on the state being a totalized whole.⁴¹ In *Being and Event*, Badiou argues that the constructivist account leads to a state that both overcounts and undercounts its parts, and the constructivist state both overextends its power, becoming more than what it counts, and underdetermines its power by not counting all those who are included within it. Hegel's state has precisely the same problems because it is rooted in its claim to be whole.

Marx criticizes Hegel for attempting to have the state pass for the whole, rather than seeing its dependence on an outside, on civil society.⁴² For Marx, the problem of not seeing the dependence is that the state considers itself independent (as more than its parts) while it operates wholly as the instrument of the capitalist (reduced to one part at the exclusion of the other). Badiou follows Marx's concern when he criticizes capitalist parliamentarianism, which supports rights to individuality only in the effort to foster a global economic project.

Badiouian subtraction focuses itself against accounts of political life wherein the state claims to be all, denies its own investment in the count, and fails to count all who are included, exposing contradiction in the

state's claim to totality. Subtraction affirms the belonging of those not counted and achieves a true position outside the state, a position whose aim is not to be better inscribed within it, but to disrupt political life that claims to be whole. Subtraction offers an alternative to the manageable opposition produced by the whole, which forecloses true separation from the state,⁴³ as the opposition posited by the Bush Administration between itself, under the name of democracy, and fundamentalist terrorism captured in Bush's cowboy dictum, "You're either with us, or you're against us."⁴⁴ This statement appears to be the first indeterminate negation of the Hegelian dialectic, but what became clear is that it was in fact determinate and then fully mediated negation. The state was not just pointing to something outside of itself, that it defined itself against, in fact, as some have argued, the threat of the radical Islamist movement in the Mideast, focused on al-Qaeda in particular, was largely invented by American neo-conservatives in order to produce a collective identity around the effort to champion market democracy in the face of an external threat.⁴⁵ This argument furthers the case that an outside that is produced by its opposition proves unable to function as a true alternative because it is incorporated into the logic of the original position.

The same structure of an opposition is found between the state and its anarchic resistance,⁴⁶ which the "democratic" state produces and thrives on as the hysterical character of the "infinite demand" of resistance that instead of challenging the state justifies it.⁴⁷ Consider the way that war protestors were used by the Bush Administration in 2003 to legitimate the war effort as the project of a democratic state with a healthy opposition kindly taking democracy, and the very capacity to protest that the protesters exemplified, to the world.⁴⁸ This resistance functions as the negation of the state that shows the state to be capable of recognizing itself in its other, in its opposition. Moreover, the position of the infinite demand is negative in the specific sense that it is a politics that can proclaim what should not be but not what can be. An equally impotent form of opposition is the two-party system in the United States, where the system seems to allow opposition by having two parties, though the parties do not oppose one another in any genuine way.

The American two-party system is perhaps the most blatant example of the constricting force of the whole making the regime of one party less and less distinguishable from the regime of the other. Such circumstances should not come as a surprise since, despite U.S. President Barack Obama's great effort to advertise how many small donors supported both his campaigns, 49 percent of total contributions came from contributions of \$1,000 or more compared to 76 percent of Mitt Romney's total contributions. A 27 percent difference in big donations does not a true exterior make.⁴⁹ But the two-party system example, favorite whipping boy though it may be, does a disservice to the reader if she supposes that a reform of the system could overcome the problems of totalizing politics.

No. In the United States, even if *Citizens United*, the case granting First Amendment rights to corporations, were overturned, if strict campaign finance laws were instituted and enforced, if the tax burden were more proportionally borne by the rich, if workers were paid a living wage, even then, as long as there is still no possibility of a place for political life beyond economism, we would still be operating within the alienating structure of capitalist parliamentarianism; we would still be subject to the tyranny of the whole.

Against these totalizing structures of politics, Badiou posits subtraction, which aims to facilitate a radical emancipatory politics that is legitimately outside, thus carrying the force of such a true exteriority. The status of the excluded third “radical emancipatory politics” depends on the view of the dialectic that one takes: if it is convergent such that what is opposed will be reconciled, then this opposition is complete; it forms the whole of political life and there is no other recourse. But if the dialectic is divergent, then the goal is to divide, to disrupt the whole of what is and what appears in such a way that enables a true opposition that is not encompassed by those that purport to include all that is. As Jodi Dean writes in *The Communist Horizon*, borrowing from Rancière, who, Badiou argues, stole it from Badiou himself, “The people are always non-all, not simply because the many is open and incomplete but because it cannot totalize itself.”⁵⁰ Badiouian subtraction capitalizes on the necessary outside that the impossibility of totality invokes. Badiou enacts a universal through the subtractive process that does not co-opt all positions into a totality. From the position of that subtraction, a universalizing procedure is at work that performs the belonging of all as the truth of politics.

Badiou’s dialectic both creates a new space and undermines the structure of the system that it subtracts itself from. This is “a subtraction that is no longer dependent on the dominant laws of the political reality of a situation. . . . We need an originary subtraction capable of creating a new space of independence and autonomy from the dominant laws of the situation.”⁵¹ Žižek offers the example of people refusing to take part in a vote that is rigged, thereby making it impossible for those running the election to falsely legitimate themselves through it. This subtraction does not just add a third field, say radical emancipatory politics, to fundamentalism and liberalism; subtraction challenges the hegemony of this opposition by showing the complicity of these two apparently opposed positions.⁵² The Hegelian opposition is itself opposed to there being another position, one which cannot be determinately negated so as to be a part of the whole. The true opposition must be subtracted to upset the whole.⁵³

CONCLUSION

Badiou's materialist dialectic by attesting to achieve the universal looks like it is not conceding to the concrete drive that the Hegelian dialectic appears to pursue, but by finding the universal in a local site, Badiou's dialectic is, in fact, much more radically concrete than Hegel's. Badiou describes the universal in *Theory of the Subject* by saying, "the universal exists only in the specific," which serves to anchor the universal in the local, the project that *Logics of Worlds* further articulates.⁵⁴ By subtracting from the false totality of what Badiou calls the situation, the Hegelian attempt at the whole, Badiou produces a site from which universality becomes possible, that is, universality against totality. The material disruption of that which the proposed totality cannot include, the "void," which Badiou calls "the site of the unrepresentable," produces from a singular moment in a singular place the possibility of affirming the proper place of what has been given no place.⁵⁵ This performance of universality, which affirms the belonging of what totality both overlooks and exceeds, occurs not by including every moment and actor in history, but by a fidelity to a singular occasion in a certain time and place. This singular occasion is the subtraction from the intended totality. Continued commitment to presenting what was deemed unrepresentable involves giving a proper name to what was not previously seen. This process of naming that whose existence is previously denied announces this exclusion by the state and simultaneously activates the belonging of the excluded.

Badiou's dialectic results in a continued effort to diverge from what is taken to be the whole in the effort to produce a universal that means something other than totality. Subtraction breaks away from the supposed whole at a specific place and thus is more materially concrete than Hegel's negation. With this break from the whole, Badiou argues that Hegel is wrong because his dialectic cannot have the totalizing force it claims to have, and, hence, the Hegelian spell of the possibility of an absolute totality is broken.

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nology and Existential Philosophy in Eugene, OR, October 2013. Thanks to Paul Livingston and Michael Olson, who both read versions of this essay and gave thoughtful comments. The shortcomings are entirely my own.

NOTES

1. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). See Darrow Schecter, "Unity, Identity and Difference: Reflections on Hegel's Dialectics and Negative Dialectics," *History of Political Thought* 33 (2012): 259–279. In *Philosophy for Militants*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (New York: Verso, 2012), 30, Badiou quotes Richard Rorty as saying, "Democracy is more important than philosophy," thereby placing Rorty alongside Adorno in the camp of those who decide for justice over philosophy and reason, those who maintain that given the conflict between democracy and philosophy, we should just decide for democracy because we cannot make a philosophical argument for it. Badiou develops his criticism of Hegel in part to show that we need not decide between philosophy and justice.

2. See Alain Badiou, "The Communist Hypothesis," *New Left Review* 49 (2008): 29–42 (the essay from which *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2010), developed), where he writes, "Confronted with the artificial and murderous division of the world into two—a disjunction named by the very term, 'the West'—we must affirm the existence of the single world right from the start, as axiom and principle" (38). Badiou affirms the multiplicity of worlds in *Logics of Worlds* when he writes: "For us, it is of the essence of the world not to be the totality of existence, and to endure the existence of an infinity of other worlds outside of itself" (147); and in *Theory of the Subject* he theorizes neighborhoods as an algebraic trope for thinking intersections of groups.

3. LW 9.

4. TS 117, 34.

5. LW 141.

6. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, 117, 34. Badiou criticizes Hegel on this point in *Being and Event* when he writes that while Hegel wishes to suture the disjunctive orders of the quantitative and the qualitative, Hegel's whole project rests on "the impossibility of pure disjunction" (BE 169).

7. As Paul Livingston argues in *The Politics of Logic* (New York: Routledge, 2014), two possibilities follow from the insight that the effort to speak of the whole produces inconsistency, 11, 52–53, 187–197. Badiou concludes from this inconsistency that there is no whole. In this way, Badiou raises Russell's paradox to the level of the ontological when he argues that what is contradictory cannot be. Livingston, following Gilles Deleuze, explores the other possibility, which Livingston terms "paradoxico-criticism": the contradiction that follows the effort to speak of the whole indicates that indeed, there is a whole, but it is contradictory. Note that Badiou's response is Hegelian insofar as it denies that contradiction or inconsistency can have real being, while it is not Hegelian insofar as Badiou's response must deny completeness.

8. TS 34. See Bosteels, "For Badiou, dialectics ultimately means a form of thinking that relates to the truth of a situation, not by way of a mediation, but through an interruption, a scission or a cut in representation," in "On the Subject of the Dialectic," in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Bloomsbury Academic Group, 2004), 150–164, 163.

9. Hegel continues, "[A]nd is of a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labour of its own transformation. Spirit is indeed never at rest but always engaging in moving forward. But just as the first breath drawn by a child after its long, quiet nourishment breaks the gradualness of merely quantitative growth—there is a qualitative leap, and the child is born—so likewise the Spirit in its formation matures slowly

and quietly into its new shape, dissolving bit by bit the structure of its previous world, whose tottering state is only hinted at by isolated symptoms. The frivolity and boredom which unsettle the established order, the vague foreboding of something unknown, these are the heralds of approaching change. The gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a sunburst which, in one flash, illuminated the features of the new world." *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 11.

10. Note that the account of the operation differs from *Being and Event* to *Logics of Worlds*. The count-as-one from inconsistent multiplicity in *Being and Event* at the level of ontology becomes a consistent multiplicity of things at the level of appearing or phenomenology (in Badiou's sense) in *Logics of Worlds*.

11. See Adriel M. Trott, "The Truth of Politics in Alain Badiou: 'There Is Only One World,'" in *Parrhesia* 12 (2011): 82–93; Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens, "Introduction to Alain Badiou's Philosophy," in Badiou, Feltham, and Clemens, *Infinite Thought* (London: Continuum, 2005) 1–28; Norman Madarasz, "Translator's Introduction," Badiou and Madarasz, *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006) 1–20. See also Paul Livingston, "Agamben, Badiou, and Russell," *Continental Philosophy Review* 42 (2009): 297–325, and Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) chapters 3 and 4.

12. Badiou develops this argument in "The Greater Logic, 1," LW 109–172. While I am using arguments for the inexistence of the whole from *Theory of the Subject* and *Being and Event*, and I acknowledge the historical development of Badiou's thought, I maintain that the argument against the inexistence of the whole traverses Badiou's work and remains fundamental.

13. LW 110.

14. See Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).

15. Livingston, "Agamben, Badiou, Russell," 314, 316.

16. LW 144.

17. TS 119.

18. LW 141.

19. As Badiou writes in *Logics of Worlds*, "It is indeed a question of establishing that every consideration of being-as-a-whole is inconsistent. The question of the limits of the visible universe is but a secondary aspect of the ontological question of the Whole," 111.

20. TS 193. I take Badiou to agree with Hegel here while, as I will show below, he recasts these two realms of being beyond Hegel's matter and spirit to be the realm of material and its name. Bruno Bosteels describes the difference in these dialectics as the difference between Hegel's internal division and Badiou's division of the whole, following Mao, "One divides into two." Bosteels quotes Badiou from *Theory of the Subject*, 14, in *Badiou and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 80.

21. TS 190.

22. *Ibid.*, 193.

23. Badiou and Tzuchien Tho, "From the 'Red Years' to the Communist Hypothesis: Three Decades of Dividing into Two," in *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011) 87–105, 102.

24. *Ibid.*, 102. It is this holding together of multiplicity and unity without achieving a totalizing position that I argue makes Badiou neither Hegelian (because not a sublated integration of a dialectical confrontation) nor Kantian (because there is no return to an antinomial position). Slavoj Žižek associates Badiouian subtraction with Hegel, but then raises the question of whether Badiou is really Kantian in "From Purification to Subtraction: Badiou and the Real," in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 165–181. Adrian Johnston similarly accuses Badiou of an implicit Kantianism based on the operation of the count-as-one on the multiple that Johnston maintains reflects Kant's *Ding an sich*, in Johnston,

"Phantom of Consistency: Alain Badiou and Kantian Transcendental Idealism," in *Continental Philosophy Review* 41 (2008): 345–366.

25. Bruno Bosteels argues against Hallward's reading that mathematics replaces the dialectic. Bosteels argues that not only does Badiou champion a dialectic that makes sense of the relation between his ontology and his eventual politics, but that Badiou is best read dialectically to avoid misunderstanding his work. I take Bosteels' multiplication of the dialectic, where one is at work in Badiou and another in our reading of Badiou, to emphasize how Badiou does not simply reject but moves beyond Marxist material dialectics to produce the possibility of something new, which requires reading the ontology with an eye to the difference between how the order of being operates and how the eventual disruption to this order comes about in light of understanding how that order operates. See Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, 7–8, and Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 49–50.

26. TS 121.

27. *Ibid.*, 190. Despite Badiou discarding this language of contradiction from *Theory of the Subject* in his later work, he is still working on this same project throughout his corpus, as my reading of his treatment of Hegel in *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* aims to show.

28. LW 117.

29. *Ibid.*, 45.

30. As Badiou writes in the *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, which articulates his project in *Logics of Worlds*, "That truths exist, be it as exceptions to the particular laws of a world, in no way exempts us from respecting our materialist axiom: in so far as everything that exists is woven out of bodies and languages, we must be able to explain how truths come to exist as bodies within a given world. We must, in short, be capable of thinking how truths appear." Alain Badiou, *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 26. See Michael Olson, "A Materialist Transcendental: The Onto-logy of *Logics of Worlds*," *Angelaki* 2013 (18): 143–159.

31. Badiou, *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*: 24.

32. LW 45.

33. TS 193.

34. Bosteels develops philosophy's material ground following Althusser in *Badiou and Politics*, 45–50.

35. LW 152.

36. This dialectical process seems to be traceable developmentally for Badiou as well. He seeks a path to show the outside and finds subtraction in *Being and Event*, but then he realizes he needs to have a way of formalizing the appearing of being, and in particular, the appearance of truth procedures and subjects and thus turns to category theory and the *Logics of Worlds*.

37. LW 46.

38. Badiou, *Plato's Republic: A Dialogue in 16 Chapters*, trans. Susan Spitzer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 207 a.

39. *Ibid.*

40. (LW143–144)

41. As Alberto Toscano writes in "Communism as Separation," in Hallward, ed., *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, "[Political subjectivation] cannot rely on the internal dynamics of representation to assure the possibility that unbinding may itself be applied back on to the bound structures of representation. Having abdicated the principle of (class) antagonism, politics thus depends on a wager on the dysfunction of representation, on holding true to the decision that something in representation has faltered, that at the edges of order the real of unbinding has made an irruption," 146.

42. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in *The Marx / Engels Reader* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1978), 21.

43. As Daniel Bensaid argues in "Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event," in Hallward, ed., *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, "Politics as such

comes about, then, on the basis of its separation from the state." Why? Because "[n]othing in the domain of the state can be against the state," 100.

44. Pres. George W. Bush, September 20, 2001, address to a joint session of Congress.

45. Adam Curtis, "Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear," including "Power of Nightmares: Baby It's Cold Outside," "Power of Nightmares: The Phantom Victory," and "Power of Nightmares: The Shadows in the Cave." *BBC Programme Catalogue*, BBC. First aired 2004.

46. Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (New York: Verso, 2008), 339–340, 348–349, 408–411.

47. Against Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (New York: Verso Books, 2008). Slavoj Žižek develops from Jacques Lacan the four positions of political life in "Four Discourses, Four Subjects," in *Cogito and the Unconsciousness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 74–113. Jodi Dean uses the four discourses to articulate the powerlessness of the protestor or resister in the structure of contemporary representational parliamentary politics and to argue that the Bush–Islamic fundamentalist couplet mirrors the hysterical structure of the protestor–Bush engagement in *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 75–94.

48. On February 18, 2003, in a press conference, Bush said, "Democracy is a beautiful thing, and [sic] that people are allowed to express their opinion." Associated Press, "Bush Says He Is Undeterred by Weekend Protests Against War," *New York Times*, February 18, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/18/international/18CND-PREX.html>, last accessed August 24, 2013. On November 18, 2003, in London he said more pointedly that "the tradition of free speech" is "alive and well here in London. We have that at home too. They now have that right in Baghdad as well." George W. Bush, "Address at Whitehall Palace," <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/11.19.03.html>, last accessed August 24, 2013.

49. Thomas Ferguson, Paul Jorgensen, and Jie Chen, "Poles Apart? Party Polarization and Industrial Structure in American Politics Now a Preliminary Quantitative Assessment," presented at Institute for New Economic Thinking Annual Conference, Honk Kong, April 2013. By total, Ferguson et al. mean monies spent by 527 committees and other "independent" campaign vehicles in addition to the campaigns and national committees. In 2008, 61 percent of money contributed directly to Obama's presidential campaign came from donations above \$500 compared to 63 percent of McCain's direct campaign contributions above \$500 (in aggregate). 38 percent of Obama's direct campaign contributions came from donations above \$1,000 (again in aggregate) compared to 40 percent of McCain's campaign contributions above \$1,000, see Ferguson et al., 11.

50. Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* (London: Verso, 2012), 99. See Badiou, "Rancière and Apolitics," in *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 116: "To begin with I can say, along with a few others, that I recognize myself in important parts of Rancière's work. And all the more so since I have the literally justifiable feeling of having largely anticipated, along with a few others, these parts."

51. Badiou, "Crisis of the Negative," *Critical Inquiry* 34 (2008): 651–652.

52. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 411. See "The Pair Voting Project" where Republican and Democratic voters in the United States agree together not to vote for the major party candidates in pairs so that they can vote without the fear that not voting for the major party candidate will be a vote for the other major party candidate. See www.facebook.com/pairvotingproject.

53. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 408–410.

54. TS 120–121.

55. BE 111.

FOUR

The Question of Art: Badiou and Hegel

Gabriel Riera

It is often said that the distinguishing feature of French philosophy since the 1960s is “a generalized anti-Hegelianism” (Deleuze) or an attempt “to flee Hegel” (Foucault). This continues to be the case with Lyotard’s disdain for “grand narratives” expressing “the necessary movement of spirit in search of its own expression,” or Derrida’s critique of *Geist* (and of Hegel’s doctrine of *Geist* in particular) in *Of Spirit*. But to move away from Hegel still implies taking him as a point of reference. In Foucault’s words, “it assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his ruses directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us.”¹

There have been two distinctive responses to Hegel in France. On one hand, we find those who favor synchronic totalities over diachronic totalizations as a way of understanding human society. On the other hand, there is a dialectical response that called for a “Hegelianism without reserve” in which negations and differences could proliferate endlessly without ever being recuperated into a positive and totalizing synthesis.² Alain Badiou, however, seems to occupy a middle ground between these two positions: because of his Lacanian and Althusserian orientation, he tends to privilege structure, that is, synchronic totalities that will be subjected to a formalization grounded in mathematics. And, in part, as a reaction against what he deems to be the limitations of both Lacanian and

Althusserian structuralism, he seeks to re-define dialectics as a way to pinpoint heterogeneities that subtract themselves from the structure, but, unlike deconstruction's proliferating play, they can also be reapplied to the very same structure in order to effectuate real changes. The goal in Badiou's philosophy seems constant: to provide an account of the rare emergence of a heterogeneous element (the event) not stipulated by the logic of the same (structure) and the ensuing operator of its consequences, a subject that is no longer conceived as the void of a structural totality.

In an interview included in the English translation of *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectics*, Badiou claims "[I] began, in the years before '68, a book project on Hegel, which would have been done with Hyppolite."³ Badiou never completed this book but he refers to the specter of a book on Hegel that haunts his trajectory. Unlike his French counterparts, Badiou's Hegel is not so much the author of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the author of the *Great Logic*. Badiou's sustained debate with Hegel recurs throughout his three major books: *Theory of the Subject* (1982), *Being and Event* (1988), and *Logics of the Worlds* (2014), as well as in books such as *The Century* (2005) and the *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (1998). And although in fact Hegel is the privileged interlocutor on the question of dialectics, Badiou claims that: "Hegel did not succeed in really finding the dialectical point that is precisely the one between dialectics and formalism. Finally, his speculative formalism swallowed up the dialectic rather than showing it."⁴ For Badiou, then, Hegel was not dialectical enough, and the task of reading Hegel amounts to isolating dialectics and freeing it from speculative formalism.⁵

Throughout his work, Badiou employs protocols to reframe Hegel's dialectics in order to provide an account for what exceeds it and thus interrupts the totalizing unification to which it is prone. This reframing is a pre-condition for a reformulation of materialist dialectic able to account for the exception that separates itself from the totality (the event and the process of fidelity to its consequences whose belated operator is the subject), but that also ought to be included in order to produce real change.⁶ Badiou's way of reading Hegel seems to present an alternative to the dilemma which, according to Beiser, is at play in the revival of Hegel on both sides of the Atlantic: "If our scholarship is historically accurate, we confront a Hegel with profound metaphysical concerns alien to the spirit of contemporary philosophical culture, which mistrusts metaphysics. But if we continue to interpret Hegel in a non-metaphysical manner, we have to accept that our interpretation is more a construction of our contemporary interests than the real historical school."⁷

If there is something that from the start and as early as *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic* distinguishes Badiou's approach to the so-called "new-Hegel," this is that Hegel "must be split from within." The dialectic of the split is to be regarded as a *logic of scission* in which all

concepts are internally divided between a dialectical and a non-dialectical side. This is a move that, according to Badiou, enables us to see that in the split rational kernel of Hegelian dialectic lurks a doctrine of the event (the new or strong singularity). Three important protocols in Badiou are the positing of an immanent infinity; the ensuing dismantling of Hegel's conceptual opposition "good/bad infinity" through a mathematically inflected reading; third, the interplay between the local and the global as it appears in *Logics of the World*. The first protocol is crucial for Badiou's doctrine of truth, while the second and the third have to do with the generic character of the Idea.

Badiou implements dialectic as a process of division rather than one of reconciliation. Dialectic appears both as the means for relating the terms to their own void, and for showing their multiple dimensions. *Theory of the Subject* implements a materialist dialectic in which scission appears as the inner law of being; *Being and Event* implements a dialectic in which being appears as a pure multiplicity, the event as its un-subsumable excess, and the conjunction "and" as the marker for the operator of change: the subject.

In this chapter, I am particularly concerned with how Badiou deals with Hegel within the domain of art (one of Badiou's four *conditions* of philosophy). The focus of my argument is Badiou's implementation of these protocols (scission, the immanent infinite, and the interplay between the global and the local) in order to elucidate the question of art at different junctures in his work. The leading question is: how does the reframing of dialectic play out in Badiou's conception of art vis-à-vis Hegel's. Insofar as Hegel's philosophy of art reduces art to an object of philosophy, one would expect that the protocol of scission would be at play in Badiou's assessment of Hegel in order to isolate its real kernel. Because art is conceived as a *condition*, that is, as a producer of immanent truths, the protocol of immanent infinity should be operative to rethink the dialectic of the work (finite) and the artistic Idea (infinite), that is, the reach and scope of the concept of work.

However, things are not so simple. In *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, the first book entirely devoted to art as a condition of philosophy, Badiou places Hegel squarely under one of the four exhausted forms of the rapport between philosophy and art, the Romantic, and therefore, no positive dimension of Hegel's aesthetic thinking can be found. Everything seems to indicate that, unlike in more recent Hegel scholarship, there is nothing left of Hegel's philosophy of art that can be "put back into circulation" to think post-Hegelian art.⁸ What are the reasons for Badiou's view of Hegel's aesthetics? Why is it that his golden rule for reading Hegel's dialectic, scission, does not seem to apply to his philosophy of art? How does the notion of immanent infinity allow Badiou to reframe Hegel's understanding of the work of art? How do these protocols allow Badiou to treat the

distribution of the sensible and the intelligible in a different way than Hegel?

In order to answer these questions and to elaborate some possible answers, I must first highlight some of the defining features of Badiou's philosophy by way of two moments: Plato and Hegel. The former points toward the "return of philosophy to itself" and thus toward a post-Heideggerian reformulation of the relationship between philosophy and art, more exactly the poem, a necessary move for conceiving of a new, non-exhausted relationship between philosophy and art (what Badiou calls an "inaesthetic" rapport); the latter points toward a reformulation of materialist dialectic in terms of a doctrine of the event and of its operator of re-inscription, the subject. Moreover, the "Hegelian moment" is decisive not only for assessing how Badiou breaks with Romanticism and its philosophy of finitude, but also for assessing his redefinition of the work of art in terms of the dialectic between finite form and the infinity of the aesthetic Idea.

Badiou conceives art under the double capture of a doctrine of the event (the new) and the ensuing fidelity to its fleeting passage whose corollary is the production of a truth as well as the re-founding of materialist dialectic deemed able to pinpoint the appearing of the new and its consequences in a situation (dialectic of the global and the local).

With the notion of the event Badiou has all the conceptual means to construct a doctrine of truth understood as an indiscernible part or sub-set of a given situation. In order to construct the generic sub-set of a situation, Badiou begins with the militant intervention that claims that something will have taken place, and that this happening has come to interrupt the homogeneous order of being. This intervention is conceived as an illegal naming, a putting into circulation of a signifier that is strange to the language of the situation. What follows naming is a process of "research" [*enquête*], "fidelity to the event," by which a decision must be made on which elements are to be connected to the supernumerary signifier. The sub-set thus constructed out of the process of research and positively related to the name or signifier is a generic truth. In Meditation 31 of *Being and Event*, Badiou states that philosophy is conditioned by the faithful procedures of its time, which means that the notion of truth and its evental [*événementiel*] dimension are fundamental in order to articulate a doctrine of conditions and thus the heterogeneous nature of truth. The relationship between philosophy and art, the focus of this essay, can only be thought within this conceptual frame, the ontology Badiou constructs in *Being and Event*.⁹

BETWEEN PLATO AND HEGEL: ON BADIOU'S CONCEPTUAL MONTAGE

Plato's (Re)Turn

Badiou's project consists in thinking "real change," what he calls the event or, most recently, "strong singularity."¹⁰ In order to do so, he must activate a "return to Plato," albeit a post-Cantorean mathematically inflected Plato, enabling him to proclaim a commencement of philosophy.¹¹ Badiou thus seeks to remedy what he believes best defines contemporary thinking: paralysis and an oscillation between historiography and a lack of situatedness. Badiou posits "a return to philosophy itself" against a number of contemporary positions that have either relinquished the possibility of thinking "real change," or have declared the "exhaustion" of philosophy's possibilities.¹²

The "return to Plato" commands the activation of two conceptual *personæ*, the Sophist and the Poet, viewed as the main targets of the philosopher.¹³ The former is not only the enemy, but also the philosopher's impersonator, and its contemporary defining feature consists in being the thinker who wants to replace truth by rules or norms.¹⁴ Badiou's concept of truth is central to his philosophy, to philosophy itself. We are dealing here with an empty category since, for Badiou, philosophy does not produce truths; rather, it is an operation on the heterogeneous truths produced by other fields (what he calls "conditions": politics, science, art, and love). Philosophy organizes the figure of the heterogeneous truths of a given epoch: "Philosophy is the place of thought where the 'there is' [*il y a*] of these truths, and their compossibility, is stated" (C 24).

The concept of *condition* is crucial to Badiou's philosophy: it is a process of formalization in which philosophy can come into contact with being (understood as a pure and infinite inconsistency) by the contingent strike of an event. A key element in Badiou's conception of the four conditions is what he calls "de-suturing," a necessary operation that favors the real difference among forms of thinking, as it affirms both the heterogeneity of the generic procedures and its differences, once philosophy captures their truths.¹⁵ Philosophy cannot have access to the real without the formalization of these four conditions. The essential feature of a condition is that of being a process of truth production; the conditions are thus the sites where the void of being can present itself under the guise of an event.

Philosophy's elucidation of the truths of an epoch proceeds in two different ways, the argumentative and the rhetorical; it borrows procedures from two adversaries, not only the Sophist but also the Poet, as a way of capturing and, above all, of *subtracting* truth from the networks of meaning—a truth is what interrupts the regime of meaning. Philosophy

thus opposes the truth-effect to the meaning-effect. Badiou defines philosophy as

. . . the evocation, under the category of Truth, of a void that is located in accordance with the inversion of a succession and the other-side of a limit. To do so, philosophy constructs the superposition of a fiction of knowledge and a fiction of art. It constructs an apparatus to seize truths, which is to say: to state that there are truths, and to let itself be seized by this "there are" —and thus to affirm the unity of thought. The seizing is driven by the intensity of a love without object, and draws up a persuasive strategy that has no stakes in power. The whole process is prescribed by the conditions that are art, science, love and politics in their *evental* figures. Last, this process is polarized by a specific adversary, namely, the sophist. (C 15)

The goal of the philosophical convening of poetry is to present the void that constitutes the being of truth.¹⁶ This void is unrepresentable within the order of knowledge: truth punches a hole in the texture of knowledge, in the fabric of meaning. The post-*evental* truth is indiscernible, generic, and no hermeneutic could extricate the generic part of a situation that comprises its truth. When philosophy deals with the suture of truth to the void it must appeal to poetry's devices. The poetic act is understood as a constructive knowledge and not as the presentation of the unrepresentable [*insensé*, senseless] truth.

Heidegger and his legacy become a major target of the "return to Plato," since Badiou understands that "the end of philosophy" also entails the idea of the end of truth. Also, in the dialogue between *Dichtung* and *Denken* that the late Heidegger conceived as the only way to an *anderen Denken* able to reactivate thinking against the devastating menace of the essence of technology and instrumental reason, philosophy, according to Badiou, relinquishes some of its essential possibilities.¹⁷

Everything seems to indicate that the question of art in Badiou amply exceeds the limits of what one could call a philosophy of art, or a critique of art, since in the crucial way of positing the rapport between philosophy and art the very existence of both are at stake. Within the context of the "return of philosophy itself," Badiou's account seems to authorize a reversal of Nietzsche's dictum and thus to posit a new form of understanding the relationship between philosophy and art after the reversal of Platonism: "we have art not to perish from norms and rules."

More recently, and once the "return" is accomplished, for Badiou "Plato" becomes the extemporaneous name of a war machine against "democratic materialism" and its major interpreter, cultural relativism, as it signals the exception of the Idea: eternal, immanent, and immediate; a way of thinking the absolute in its immanent production.

Platonic-inflected criticism allows Badiou to sever philosophy from the poem, to place it within a context other than that of the "exhaustion of

metaphysics," and to prop up a doctrine of truth in which the conditions are in constant confrontation with the plurality of representations devoid of truths that is the norm in Western democracies.¹⁸

HEGEL'S TORSION

Hegel détermine un horizon, une langue, un code au sein desquels nous sommes encore, aujourd' hui. Hegel, de ce fait, est notre Platon: celui qui délimite—idéologiquement ou scientifiquement, positivement ou négativement — les possibilités théoriques de la théorie.

—Châtelet, *Hegel*, 13

Scission

The return to Plato brings about not only the possibility of philosophy's existence, but also the possibility of thinking the new. The "return to Plato" and the ensuing "return of philosophy to itself" goes hand in hand with a renewal of a materialist dialectic, a form of thinking that forces the emergence of the truth of a given situation, not through a mediation, but through an interruption, a scission, or cut in representation by means of which the real becomes a condition of possibility for a change in subjective position.¹⁹

Badiou's early writings are an attempt to extricate the rational (materialist) kernel from the Hegelian dialectic.²⁰ Badiou makes use of Mao's famous formula "the one divides into two," whereby reality is not only a process but also the processing in which the process itself finds its own fundament in the ontological-dialectic principle of *scission*. The two targets of Badiou's approach are Althusser's identification of Hegel's "real kernel" with the concept of "process without a subject," and the Marxist reduction of the subject to an imaginary and ideological dimension. For Badiou, the "real kernel" cannot be severed from the effect of subjectivization it induces. Through this polemic, the fundamental concepts of Badiou's philosophy emerge: scission and subject, whose idealistic and materialistic slopes must, in turn, be divided so as to form the fundaments of a dialectic of the new.

In *Theory of the Subject* Badiou claims that it is possible to isolate two matrices of the dialectic in Hegel: a vitiated one by the use of the concept of alienation, and another whose operator is represented by the concept of scission.²¹ While the first of these two registers is based on negation and the negation of negation, the second is based on the idea of an internal division: there is a one only out of a two, or, in other words, it is not possible to think something without splitting it.

The arguments developed in *Being and Event* make clear that Hegel's thinking should be purified from all subsequent additions that, over the

course of two centuries, had resulted in obscuring the fundamental message. The result of this operation would be a renewed understanding of dialectical thinking no longer based on the category of totality, but rather on the relationship between void and excess, on the split and the symptomatic torsion of identity rather than on the overcoming of negation, on the exhaustion of representation rather than on the elusive self-presentation of the Concept.

Following the basic presuppositions of *Theory of the Subject*, this dialectic should be defined in terms of splitting and torsion of the scission itself. This means that what is important here is not so much the opposition between being and event, but rather the internal split of each one of them. In the case of being, this is conceived as scission between presentation and representation, between structure and meta-structure, an impasse that results from the operations of counting. Regarding the event, this is not only or simply defined in terms of a sovereign belonging to itself, but is always presented as the event of or for a given situation within which it finds its site of emergence (the "evental site").²²

Infinity

"The One does not exist"

Badiou's basic axiom concerning the multiplicity of being and the two ensuing axioms on the inexistence of both the One and the Whole are decisive for thinking an immanent infinity. In turn, this immanent infinity sustains the doctrine of truth (always local) and the extension of the Idea (always infinite). This conceptual montage is central for thinking each of the four conditions, and particularly, the artistic condition that is the focus of this chapter.

Badiou posits the ontological thesis concerning the infinity of being. Under the axioms of set theory and by implementing the ontological implications of Cantor's theorem, he posits that infinity is multiple. This means that Badiou manages to elucidate a positive concept of infinity that is no longer dependent or derived from the Whole or Totality (Nature), nor from the One (God).

In Meditation 13 of *Being and Event*, Badiou tackles the question of infinity from an ontological point of view. After showing the persistence of ontological finitism up until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he claims that "the ontologization of infinity, besides abolishing the one-infinite, also abolishes the unicity of infinity; what it proposes is the vertigo of an infinity of infinities distinguishable within their common opposition to the finite" (BE 145). The question now becomes how to isolate a series of means in order to think infinity without the mediation of the One. The focus is Aristotle's dialectic of the already and the still-more which must be split from within.

Badiou posits four criteria: an initial point of being (*already*), or presented multiple; a procedure or rule of passage that produces the other-same; the verification of a “still-more,” or a term not-yet-traversed and, above all, a second existent, a multiple which is supposed so that the “still-more” is reiterated within it, an “existential seal,” as he calls it, that fixes the site of the Other for the other. The latter is the crucial element since, without it, the rule is unable to reach the limit. The rule only tells us how to pass from one term to another, but this other is the same (afterwards, the “still-more” repeats itself): “The rule will not present this multiple, since it is by failing to completely traverse it that the rule qualifies it as infinite. It is thus necessary that it be presented ‘elsewhere,’ as the place of the rule’s impotence” (BE 146). This is the site of the Other: it is from this site that this becoming-the-same of the others proceeds. The Other is both the site of the rule’s exercise and of its impotence. It is the limit of the rule:

An infinite multiple is thus a presented multiple which is such that a rule of passage may be correlated to it, for which it is simultaneously the place of exercise and limit. Infinity is the Other on the basis of which there is between the fixity of the already and the repetition of the still-more—a rule according to which the others are the same. The existential status of infinity is double. What is required is both the being-already-there of an initial multiple and the being of the Other which can never be inferred from the rule. This double existential seal is what distinguishes real infinity from the imaginary of the one-infinity, which was posited in a single gesture. (BE 147–48)

It is only the fourth criteria, the second existential seal, which voids any deduction of infinity from the finite. By focusing on the dialectic between the limit and the rule, Badiou severs the deduction of infinity from finitude and posits a post-metaphysical notion of infinity no longer determined by the One and the Whole.

Badiou implements this schema for reading Hegel’s discussion of infinity. For Badiou, Hegel forecloses the actual/real infinite, as he tries to deduce it from the immanent structure of being itself. Hegel distinguishes between a “bad” or “spurious” infinite [*das Schlechte-Unendliche*] and a “good” one; the former being the mathematically determined infinity, as it suggests an unending succession of finite things, an approximation to the “good” infinity (that of philosophy). The bad infinite represents repetitive nature’s surpassing; it is repetition, the negative determination of the finite. For Hegel, philosophy must deal with things that present themselves “directly as infinite with regard to their content.”²³ By discarding the mathematical infinity in favor of a metaphysical infinity, the absolute Notion of infinity—what in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* he calls “the simple essence of life”—Hegel still preserves the One. Being as Being, via the interiorizing of the negative, generates from itself and out

of itself “the operator of infinity.” In other words, Hegel bars any access to real infinity as a way of grounding an inherent law of Being that guarantees the substantial continuity of the One and the Infinite.

The focus of Badiou’s Meditation 15 is Hegel’s concept of “quantitative infinity” from *The Science of Logic*.²⁴ For our argument what matters is how Badiou shows that the concept of infinity plays the role of this non-subsumable element: “Hegel, with a special genius, set out to co-engage the finite and the infinite on the basis of the point of being alone. Infinite becomes an internal reason for the finite itself, a simple attribute of experience in general, because it is a consequence of the regime of the one. . . . Being *has* to be infinite” (BE 163–64). Badiou shows that the “good infinity” — Hegel strove to go beyond the restricted notion of infinity, but he fell short of the mark — is copied over the notion of the “bad infinity,” or even, the “good infinity” can only count as good insofar as it can be subsumed to a dialectical schema that is always guaranteed to reconstitute the sovereignty of reason. Insofar as “good infinity” does not break the “immanence of the one,” it also suffers the same sort of limitations of the “bad infinity” that “originates in its being solely defined locally, by the still-more of this already that is determinateness” (BE 165). The Hegelian system thus breaks down in its failure to contain, subsume, that which belongs to the realm of pure multiplicity: the infinite properly conceived as the very definition exceeding every limit imposed by the count-as-one. The magic wand of the dialectic does not manage to transform the bad infinity (quantitative) into the good one (qualitative). Badiou concludes: “in wishing to maintain the continuity of the dialectic right through the very chicanes of the pure multiple, and to make the entirety proceed from the point of being alone, Hegel cannot rejoin infinity”²⁵ (BE 170).

“There is no Totality”

Hegel not only subordinates infinity to the One, but also to the Whole, to Totality. A philosophy under conditions, one that operates under the pressure of external truths, must also relinquish the subordination of infinity to Totality, since a truth is always local. While Hegel’s thinking is foundationally autotelic, Badiou’s is heterotelic.

Hegel’s dialectic consists in interiorizing totality in the very movement of thinking. Insofar as one of Badiou’s basic axioms is that “the Whole does not exist,” this supposes a different distribution between what is interior and what is exterior to thinking, universality and truth, and the local and the global extension of a truth. It is in his critique of Hegel’s basic presupposition regarding the existence of a Totality where one can measure Badiou’s distance from what he deems Hegel’s “idealist dialectic.”

While for Hegel Totality, understood as its own realization, is the unity of Truth, in Badiou totality's inexistence fragments the conceptual exposition and sanctions that there are only local truths. Whereas in Hegel totality takes the idea of speculation's unconditioned autonomy to its limits, for Badiou philosophy is always under the condition of external truths. Although a world is, like the Hegelian Absolute, the unfolding of its own infinity, unlike Hegel's Absolute, a world cannot construct the concept or measure of its infinity from within, as Cantor's axiomatic, and, particularly, the inaccessible nature of an infinite cardinal, stipulates.

Badiou's critique of Hegel's notion of infinity allows him to posit an alternative triad to Hegel's. While for the German philosopher, Totality's triad consists of the immediate, the mediation, and its overcoming, for Badiou we have the triad of the Non-Whole or Not-Totality that consists in the indifference of being, the worlds of appearing, and the procedures of truth. The vanishing cause of this triad is the event.

If it is true that Badiou deals with Hegel's concept of infinity at the ontological level, its implications, however, exceed the realm of pure being, of being as such. As we will see below, when dealing with art as a condition of philosophy, the notion of the actual infinite is crucial in order to mark a break with Romanticism and to conceive of the work of art as the "visibility of its own act."²⁶ Hegel, therefore, becomes once again the main referent: "On this point, the philosopher should know that the century is engaged in a constant debate with Hegel around the theme of the 'end of art.' This time, however, the debate takes place in a kind of unconscious proximity, rather than according to an obsessive, albeit antagonistic reference" (TC 157).

AESTHETICS, INAESTHETICS

The Inaesthetic Wager

The positing of a new relation between philosophy and art organizes the overall architecture of the *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, as well as its internal scansions. Badiou wants to delineate a relation between philosophy and art that is no longer didactic (Plato), classic (Aristotle), or Romantic (Hegel). These three types of relations, according to Badiou, are prevalent in contemporary articulations such as Marxism (Brecht), Romantic hermeneutics (Heidegger), and Freudianism (Lacan). Contrary to the new relation between philosophy and art that Badiou proposes, the three aforementioned articulations do not posit the simultaneously immanent *and* singular character of the truths proper to the work of art. These are the two positive features that the *inaesthetic* seeks to establish for thinking the relationship between philosophy and art within the space of a "re-

commenced" philosophy and after the end of the "exhaustion of philosophy."

The didactic conception asserts the superiority of philosophy over art: even if art implements truth-effects, what really matters is speculation. This is, of course, Plato's position, who sees in the work of art the semblance of a truth, and who assigns to art the task of educating the citizen. However the goal and final meaning of this process of education does not belong to art. Philosophy monitors and rules over art because only the former conceives itself as the essential education of mankind and this is so insofar as it vows itself to the whole truth, while art abandons itself to the hypnotic effects of the sensible. Plato and the Marxist conception of art coincide in this desire to master the effects of art. Bertolt Brecht's theater, according to Badiou, partakes of this schema: for the German writer there is a truth, the politics of dialectical materialism, and an educational means to make of it a triumphant truth: the theater. For the didactic schema, the truth of art is singular (art is the truth as *semblant*), but not immanent (Truth is beyond art).

The second conception is the exact reversal of the previous one; it affirms that only art is capable of truths that, this time, are understood as a subjectivity made flesh. This is the Romantic position that presupposes that the incarnation of Truth in the sensible world can only enable us to contemplate this Truth in a human form. The Absolute truth is the subject, the infinite in the finite. For the Romantics the truths of art are immanent, *but not* singular insofar as art is the whole Truth. Hegel, as the Romantics, conceives of art as a speculative project. For Hegel it is in art that the Spirit [*Geist*] abandons the sphere of the finite (embodied in the individual and social life) in order to have access to its final stage: the Absolute, that is, the reconciliation between knowledge and reality. Hegel concurs with the Romantics in conceiving art as a figure of knowledge, and, for this reason, the true work of art is at the service of neither an extrinsic signification, nor an external goal. The work of art finds its finality in its own being, which consists in the unity of the outer sensible appearance and the inner spirituality, the unity of manifestation and signification. Truth, therefore, is not symbolized by the work; it becomes embodied in it. The artistic work is the incarnation of the Idea in sensible form and thus the truths of sensible reality.

Finally the classical conception stresses the therapeutic or cathartic function of art. It is pleasure and not truth that is at stake in the work of art (from Aristotle to Lacan the question of art does not belong, strictly speaking, to theory, but rather to ethics). Art is useful because in giving pleasure it has the power to treat the passions of the soul, of producing transference in the subject through identification. This transference consists in the deposition of passions on the staging of a plausible imaginary that the work of art provides. Art has the therapeutic function of exhibiting that the object of desire, un-symbolizable in itself, is precisely what,

by subtraction, draws itself on the background of affective scintillations. It is the imaginary, organized in a certain form, in which the symbolic would allow to pass through something of the real in its singular configuration. For the classical position there is neither immanence nor singularity in the truths of art; art is simply the imaginary of truth. From this position Badiou maintains the ethical orientation, but the inflection is different since for Badiou only the contemplation of the Idea educates.

For Badiou the twentieth century has been unable to transform these types of relations between philosophy and art, and it has experienced their exhaustion. Badiou employs here a Heideggerian schema so as to declare the end of aesthetics,²⁷ and to show how each conception sutures art to different forms of knowledge. The didactic schema finds its limit in the State's ideological implementation of an art at the service of a "common cause." The Romantic schema saturates itself in the prophetic appeal and its logical correlate, waiting. Finally, the classical scheme is exhausted in the different theories of desire. For Badiou, these conceptions should be abandoned and replaced by a new rapport able to acknowledge that art produces its own truths. The thought of art is not extrinsic; it is art itself. This thought however can neither have the upper hand on any of the other truth-procedures, nor hold the key to the compossibility of the four conditions which is philosophy's proper task. Badiou sets up a relation of exteriority between philosophy and art that he names *inaesthetic*: "By inaesthetics I understand a relation of philosophy to art that, maintaining that art is itself a producer of truths, makes no claim to turn art into an object of philosophy. Against aesthetic speculation, inaesthetics describes the strictly intraphilosophical effects produced by some works of art."²⁸

Inaesthetics is not a philosophy of art, since the latter is not an object of philosophical knowledge. In other words, it is a non-speculative approach to art. The two features that distinguish Badiou's inaesthetics from the exhausted relations between philosophy and art are *immanence* (art is coextensive to the truths it produces) and *singularity* (these truths only take place in art). By affirming these two features, Badiou sustains that art is a heterogeneous and distinct process of truth production. Inaesthetics must therefore provide a set of criteria to make explicit how art's immanent presentation of truth distinguishes itself from those of the other three conditions.

Everything hinges on the relationship between the infinite and the finite. A truth names a set that positively connects all the multiples of a situation to the fugitive trace of an event. Both the situation and the process are infinite. Ontologically speaking, truth is a generic part (an infinite multiplicity) of a situation produced by the intervention of an operation of fidelity.²⁹ The work of art, however, is finite: "it exposes itself as finite objectivity in space and/or in time. Second, it is always regulated by a Greek principle of completion: it moves within the fulfill-

ment of its own limit. It signals the display of all the perfection of which it is capable. Finally, and most importantly, it sets itself up as inquiry into the question of its own finitude" (HI 11). This means that the concept of work understood in terms of an Aristotelian hylomorphic schema as synthesis cannot be appropriate to accommodate the understanding of truth as part of an infinite multiple: art must deploy in and through the finite means of sensibility the actual infinity of the Idea. Far from being the concretization, the thematization, or the representation of a given objectivity, the work of art is an act, and thus becomes the pure transparency of the act inscribed in the material traces: "the infinite is not captured *in* form, it *transits through* the form. If it is an event—if it is *what happens*—finite form can be equivalent to an infinite opening" (TC 155). This explains Badiou's favoring of Modernism, as it amounts to the affirmation of the formal power of the finite to become infinite in act:

Here we would need to contrast two senses of the word "form." The first, traditional (or Aristotelian) sense is on the side of the formation of a material, of the organic appearance of a work, of its manifestation as a totality. The second sense, which belongs to the [twentieth] century, sees form as *what the artistic act authorizes by way of new thinking*. Form is therefore an Idea as given in its material index, a singularity that can only be activated in the real grip of an act. Form is the *eidōs*—this time in a Platonic sense—of an artistic act; it must be understood *from the side of formalization*. Formalization is basically the great unifying power behind all the century's undertakings. . . . But in "formalization" the word "form" is not opposed to "matter" or "content," but is instead coupled to the real of the act. (TC 159–60)

By re-formulating the notion of work as formalization and by aligning it with the real of the act, a finite practice as art can be linked to the Idea of a multiple and infinite truth. The work of art is a local and finite point of the artistic truth (what in *Logics of the World* is called a "point-subject"). The work is "*une enquête située sur la vérité qu'elle actualise localement, ou dont elle est un fragment fini*." ³⁰ For Badiou, artistic "research" always takes place within the realm of the sensible: the truth of art entails a transformation of the sensible into an event of the Idea. ³¹ Or, the trajectory of an artistic truth is conceived in terms of a rapport between the purity and impurity of forms. A poem, a novel, a painting, a musical composition are not materials from which one could extract veridical utterances [*énoncées véridiques*]. Neither are they the expressions of ethnic or egoic particularities. From this point of view, "it is necessary to maintain that art—as the configuration 'in truths' of works—is in each and every one of its points the thinking of the thought that it itself is [*la pensée de la pensée qu'il est*]" (HI 14).

Hegel's Legacy

As we have seen above, in its effort to establish a new relationship between philosophy and art, Badiou's approach unequivocally places Hegel under one of the exhausted aesthetic rapports, the Romantic. There are very good reasons for doing so, in spite of Hegel's diatribes against the Jena Romantics and, in particular, the Schlegel brothers, which may lead to concluding that Hegel's aesthetic conceptions are irreducibly opposed to Romantic aesthetic theory. However, these attacks are both the sign of an intimate kinship and of an irrevocable opposition—a kinship insofar as Hegel not only endows art with the ontological function of revelation, but also because he shares the project of an evaluative definition of art, an irreducible opposition with regard to how Hegel posits the hierarchical relationship between art and philosophy. While the Romantic placed art and philosophy at the same level, or even credited the former with a superiority over the latter, for Hegel, to the contrary, the speculative function of philosophical rationality is more forceful than that of art.

It is possible to affirm that by de-suturing art from philosophy, Hegel seeks to avoid the epistemological difficulty that lurked behind the Romantic theory of art; a difficulty, it is true, that they did not manage to make fully explicit. This is a twofold difficulty that involves the potency of art and its placement within philosophy's system. On the one hand, if art equals or exceeds the speculative potency of philosophical discourse, how can the latter constitute itself as a discourse *on* the arts? In other words, if art is the fundamental speculative *organon*, how could there still be a *theory* of art? On the other hand and if one takes into account the accomplishment of all fundamental discourses (religion, philosophy, politics, ethics) of all fundamental human activities: how can philosophical discourse make art one of its objects, if art is itself one of its components?

Schelling had already encountered this problem even before Hegel. During the time of transcendental idealism, the former still conceived art in a Romantic way and thus privileged it over philosophy. Like the thinkers of the Jena circle, Schlegel thought that philosophy, contrary to art, was incapable of accessing the Absolute identity:

The work of art merely reflects to me what is otherwise not reflected by anything, namely that absolutely identical which has already divided itself even in the self. Hence, that which the philosopher allows to be divided even in the primary act of consciousness, and which would otherwise be inaccessible to any intuition, comes, through the miracle of art, to be radiated back from the products thereof.³²

Hence the famous thesis of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*: "art is the single and unique *organon*, the only and unique proof of philosophy" (STT 231). This thesis is a distant echo from the reflections by Hölderlin,

Schelling, and Hegel in "The Oldest Systematic Programme of German Idealism": "I am now convinced that the highest act of reason is an aesthetic act since it comprises all ideas, and that truth and goodness are fraternally united in beauty."³³ Nevertheless, if art is philosophy's *organon*, it can hardly become its object: it is rather one of its parts. Therefore, instead of announcing a speculative deduction of art, Schelling expressed the hope of a possible return of philosophy from "the primordial ocean of poetry" (STT 233). It is only after having developed his philosophy of identity, once he granted to philosophical discourse the capacity to access the *hen kai pan*, that he could also look forward to developing a philosophy of art. However, it is necessary to add that in *The Philosophy of Art* the situation is far from clear. Surely, Schelling's point of departure is the idea that henceforth it is not philosophy that has a need of art, but the other way around, since it is philosophy that "can only reopen the primal sources for reflection, sources that for the most part no longer nourish production. Only through philosophy can we hope to attain a true science of art."³⁴ Likewise philosophy's genericity is more important than the specificity of its object: "Our methodical investigation or science should be philosophy; that is essential. That it is to be specifically philosophy in relationship to art is accidental as regards our concept" (PA 14). But this contingency is only a relative one, since "an object of construction and thereby of philosophy is essentially only that which is capable as a particular of taking up the infinite into itself. Therefore, art, in order to be the object of philosophy, must as such either genuinely represent the infinite within itself as the particular, or must be capable of doing so" (PA 15).

Art is an embodiment of the Absolute, as nature or history. Therefore, in the impossibility of being an *organon* of philosophy, it will be an *analogon*: "Not only does this take place as regards art, but it also stands as a representation of the infinite on the same level as philosophy; just as philosophy presents the absolute in the archetype [*Urbild*], so also does art present the absolute in a reflex or reflected image [*Gegenbild*]" (PA 15). If philosophy presents the archetype [*Urbild*] of the Absolute, it is because it presents it in the ideality; if art presents the reflex or, even better, the counter-type [*Gegenbild*] of the Absolute, it is because it presents it in the objective reality: but ideality and reality are both the two *potences* [*Potenzen*]³⁵ of the Absolute and, as such, they are isomorphic. Art must therefore traverse in the realm of objectivity the very same figures that philosophy traverses in the realm of ideality: the system of the arts, therefore, amounts to a particular realization of fundamental ontology; art is "the real presentation of the forms of things, as they are as such, thus, it presents the forms of the *Ulbilder*" (PA 31).

One can clearly see that the difference between philosophy and the arts is minimal. Is this enough to make of art an object of philosophy? "To the extent that ideality is always a more elevated reflection of the real, the

ideal reflection of philosophy is more elevated than the real reflection of the artist"; nevertheless "insofar as it opposes to art [philosophy] is simply ideal [*nur ideal*]"; philosophy remains affected by a deficit, and from this it follows that both activities "encounter each other in the ultimate summit" (PA 34), without either of them being reducible to the other. In other words, philosophy can indeed institute art as its object, but it nevertheless remains unable to both re-absorb its objectivity and to secure its *Aufhebung* without remain.

Hegel does not accept this idea of a deficit of philosophy, nor does he accept the impossibility of a reduction without rest of art by philosophy. He posits a sharper separation between philosophy and art. However, it does not follow from this that his move can be equated with a regression to a pre-Romantic position. Before Romanticism, the separation was due to the fact that art did not exist as a philosophical concept: the two concepts were separated because philosophy had nothing to say about artistic practices or, rather, it had nothing more to say about them than what it had to say about any other human activity. Hegel, on the other hand, preserves the hard core of the Romantic revolution, namely, the institution of art as ontological knowledge, and thus the definition of artistic practices as possessing a speculative function: if art can (once again) become an object of philosophy, it will be also a singular object in the sense that, as in Schelling, it is linked to philosophy in a more intimate way than the other objects.

Hegel's solution to the epistemological difficulty inherent in the Romantic theory amounts to considering art as a speculative representation, but he does so by placing it at a lower level than philosophy. Once interpreted from a synchronic point of view, Hegel's system conceives the relationship between philosophy and art in terms of a hierarchy of logical forms: philosophy is, logically speaking, superior to art, and this is the reason why it can deal with art as its object. Nevertheless, art is still placed within the same sphere as philosophy. The relationship is asymmetrical: in so far as philosophy is the supreme logical form, art, contrary to Romantic thought, cannot utter anything concerning philosophy. This logical distinction appears also in a temporal plane: if art is inferior to philosophy, this also implies that it comes *before* philosophy, that it constitutes philosophy's past.

This, however, does not resolve the fact that Hegel's solution remains problematic given that the hierarchy is situated within the domain of Absolute Spirit, the last moment in the self-development of Being. The types of relationships that Hegel establishes between art and philosophy remain exemplary and ambiguous. He feels compelled to redouble the distinction between artistic representation and philosophical knowledge in terms of a hierarchy of the speculative organs: philosophy is not simply the meta-discourse *of* art, but it is also and at the same time endowed with a more fundamental type of truth *than* art. This logical distinction

between a meta-discourse and a discourse is, in turn, included within an evolutive hierarchy of representational practices and discourses. In the end, Hegel does not manage to truly defuse the conflict between the two speculative activities.

Not unlike the Romantics, Hegel defines art as both a speculative undertaking opposed to the prosaic knowledge of understanding and as an ecstatic form of existence opposed to empirical existence. In art, Spirit abandons the sphere of finite Spirit such as it embodies itself in the individual and social life of men in order to gain access to its stage of final development, the Absolute Spirit, that is, the reconciliation of knowledge and reality, of subject and object, of the spiritual and the sensible. This opposition between art and understanding is conceivable only because art *as such* is defined, in agreement with Romanticism, as a figure of knowledge, "*eine Gestalt des Wissens*."³⁶ This definition depends upon the idea of an intimate kinship between art and reason, and consequently, of art and philosophy. This parallel between reason and art, as well as their common opposition to understanding, aims to establish the autotelic character of art. In fact, understanding is always subservient, since it seizes the real as an exterior objectivity that is opposed to it and to which it must submit itself. It finds its determination out of itself. Reason, instead, is autotelic since it no longer conceives the real as that which opposes itself to knowledge from the outside: on the contrary, it knows itself to be identical to it. In the knowledge proper to understanding, alterity appears as exteriority, whereas for reason it is only a specific moment of knowledge, the moment when it gives itself an objective reality. Reason thus possesses in itself its own object and its own finality. This same autotely is at play in art: the *true* work of art is neither at the service of a transcendental signification (as happens in the imperfect work, symbolic art), nor of an external goal (as is the case with handicrafts), regardless of its being agreeable or useful; art finds its finality in its own being-there which is the unity of the external sensible appearance and of inner spirituality, the unity of manifestation and signification. Truth is not symbolized by the work; it is embodied in it.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between art and reason, or at least between art and pure thinking, that is, philosophical speculation: in the real of thinking, Absolute Spirit determines itself as the unity of the ideal (knowledge) and of the real (being) *in thinking*, while in art this same unity accomplishes itself in the sensible—in the three-dimensional materiality of the plastic arts, in the bi-dimensional materiality of painting, in music's evanescent sounds, or the imaginative representation of poetry. This difference is heavy in consequences, since it will ground the superiority of philosophy over art.

In order to ground the opposition between art as ecstatic reality and empirical existence, Hegel critiques the common idea according to which artworks would amount to nothing more than illusions [*Schein*] opposed

to the world's material reality. Indeed, it is necessary to reverse this commonplace in order to find a true definition of art. Here Hegel takes advantage of the ambiguity of the term *Schein(en)* that means both manifestation (phenomenon) and illusion. Hegel posits a double thesis: on the one hand, the sensible world is an illusion [*Schein*], since it presents itself as a sufficient reality, that is, insofar as it fails to recognize that it is founded by Spirit; on the other hand and insofar as it transforms the sensible world into an appearance [*Schein*] produced by artistic imagination, art, at the same time, transforms the sensible world into a manifestation [*Schein*] of Spirit, that is, it reveals its true being, its Truth. Far from being an illusion, the statue of the Greek god renders transparent its sensible substratum and makes it shine out of its own inner spirituality. By transforming it into an epiphanic manifestation of Spirit, art thus accomplishes the sublation [*Aufhebung*] of sensible reality. In other words, artistic manifestation abolishes the realm of illusion that the reified sensible reality is (when severed from its ideal ground): it changes it into a manifestation of truth, into the unity of the essence and its manifestation in the *phenomenon*—a unity that is itself ignored in the sensible immediacy of this same reality: "The essence accordingly is thus not *behind* or *beyond* appearance, instead by virtue of the fact that it is the existence that exists concretely, concrete existence is appearance [*Erscheinung*]." ³⁷

The artwork, an incarnation of the Idea in a sensible form, is thus the truth of sensible reality. Art is capable of transforming the world of sensible reality into the idea's transparent substratum because it is the artist's creation. That is, from its very birth, the artwork is Spirit's conscious exteriorization, and more exactly, the exteriorization of imagination [*Phantasie*]. As pure thinking, imagination is part of reason's realm, and thus of Spirit. The latter produces itself in the self-consciousness of its being identical with the forms with which it exteriorizes itself. But unlike reason, imagination provides a sensible form to its spiritual content, because it is only under this sensible form that it can apprehend it.

As unity of the sensible and the spiritual, art is thus born out of a double movement. On the one hand, sensible reality—which in the artwork is only worthy as appearance (and not as materiality and heaviness)—transforms itself into a kind of ideal sensibility: it is spiritualized. But on the other hand, too, spirituality, insofar as it is mediated by imagination, is rendered sensible. Art is the coalescence of sensible reality and its spiritual ground. In a certain way, it saves the phenomena, the finite world, by anchoring them in the Absolute. Not unlike Romantic theory, Hegel's theory of art is an aesthetic of content: the unity of art is guaranteed by the universality of a content that is common to all arts, their difference depends on the different material substrata in which it takes form. Because of the speculative character of art; of its participation in the sphere of Absolute Spirit, this content is the same as that of philosophy

and religion; the differentiation of these three spiritual activities is also realized through a distinction of their semiotic forms.

Not unlike the Romantics of Jena, in Hegel art is also a form of speculative knowledge. However, for Hegel art is no longer the supreme form of knowledge: above the sphere of art, he places philosophical thinking. This depreciation of art finds its justification in that it represents the Absolute in and through a sensible realization, insofar as it possesses an external appearing. This is not the case with Absolute Knowledge, as the Absolute thinks itself in its infinite freedom. It is true that for the Romantics art was also an indirect presentation (symbolic) of the Absolute, but this was due to the fact that for them any direct representation of the Absolute was deemed impossible. In Hegel, a direct representation of the Absolute is possible: it takes place in the form of a philosophical system. Hegel sets a limit to the speculative power of art, a limit he founds on the fact that art is condemned to sensible representation and that only philosophy can proceed towards a conceptual exposition of concrete universality in its proper element, *logos*. Hegel's hermeneutics of the arts finds a new justification: "representations may generally be regarded as *metaphors* of thought and concepts" (E Introduction, § 3).

The relationship that links art to philosophy is inscribed within a diachronic evolution: the works of art are the first intermediate circle that relates what is exterior, the sensible, to pure thinking. This first moment is supplanted by (Christian) religion that, in turn, finds its truth in philosophy. Since Hegel thinks that his system achieves the absolute self-realization of philosophy, art becomes a thing of the past. This thesis means that from the perspective of the self-realization of Absolute Spirit, art as speculative knowledge has no historical mission left.

This thesis, however, is ambiguous: on the one hand, it is linked to the fact that art is left without any historical mission as the torch of speculative knowledge passes into the hands of philosophy. There is nothing to regret; philosophy takes charge of the same speculative knowledge that art does, but it endows it with a paradigmatic form: the Absolute is *logos*. From this point of view, the thesis is Hegel's attempt to find a solution to the conflict of speculative faculties that ensued from Kant. The end of art is also linked to the prosaic nature of modern times. It results from the hegemony of *understanding*, of abstract reflection. From this point of view, the thesis of the end of art is linked to the unilateral character of the culture of understanding, to its inability to raise itself to the substantiality of the synthesis of the individual and the universal, of thinking and sensibility, a syntheses for which art provided a definition.

So the thesis of the end of art concerns not only the loss of art's speculative function but also the fact that we are irremediably cut off from it: we can no longer live in art, our relation with it remains external. In sum, we can no longer live in the effective truth of art. This negative relation to art, however, has a positive consequence: we can understand what art

was; we can enunciate its essence and type of truth. The death of art makes possible a type of knowledge on art.

... *Almost Nothing*

From Badiou's rescue of a materialist dialectic from the stronghold of Hegel's formalism, very little, almost nothing, remains in the domain of art. The postulate of scission does not sever the kernel from the shaft and Hegel's way of conceiving the relationship between philosophy and art squarely falls under one of the exhausted forms, the Romantic.

The postulate of real infinity allows Badiou to rethink the notion of the work of art and to provide a model for thinking the dialectic of the global and the local. The postulate of the local character of truth, and of the subject under the artistic condition as a militant of the truth, breaks with two of the defining features of Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*,³⁸ the historicist one, according to which conceptual differentiations progressively blossom in History (historicist postulate), and the hermeneutic thesis, according to which the unity of the arts is guaranteed by the identity of their content. At the level of the relationship between philosophy and art, Badiou places them in a non-hierarchical and asymmetric relationship. Art produces an intra-philosophical truth, external and heterogeneous to philosophy that the latter, afterward, must elucidate but also from which it can acquire a model for its formalization. Art does not produce speculative knowledge; it presents in a consistent fashion and lasting way the vanishing passage of the event. Or, art produces effects of formalization that philosophy can incorporate into its own "fiction of knowledge." Because of this new distribution of the relationship between philosophy and art, no distinction between a meta-discourse and a discourse on the arts is pertinent.

Not unlike Hegel, for Badiou art is also an ecstatic form of existence, and this for several reasons: the truths of art, as those of the other three conditions, are post-*evental*, that is, they trigger a process of "research" Badiou calls "fidelity" and produce an operator that connects the exceptional and undecidable nature of the event to its lasting effects, a subject. Moreover, what Badiou calls "democratic materialism," a name for what Hegel called "prosaism," bars any possibility of a process of fidelity to unfold. Art grants us access to living with the Idea and makes it possible to conceive the human subject as infinite. However, the relationship between ecstatic existence and the empirical world does not lead to any reconciliation; Badiou's dialectical materialism posits the immanence of the truths.

Although Badiou condemns the Romantic conception of art, his *inaesthetics* must presuppose the advent of the Idea as a passage through the sensible (the modern form of Platonism), and above all, that art bears witness to this passage. But unlike the Romantics, Badiou aims to pre-

serve, at all costs, this passage of the Idea from any sensible identification; the Idea being pure subtraction, it is a pure operation by which the sensible vanishes. The truth of art is always sensory, "which means transformation of the sensory into event of the Idea."³⁹ Further, Badiou aims to preserve this subtraction as the inscription of a name. Naming is in Badiou the other name of art, which perhaps places him closer to Heidegger than Badiou himself would like to acknowledge. Naming preserves the very disappearing of the Idea.

In spite of placing Hegel under one of the four exhausted rapports of philosophy and art, and in spite of dislodging the two basic postulates of his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, the historicist and the hermeneutic, Badiou shares with Hegel a basic assumption: art embodies a form of intelligibility that is essential for philosophy, which the latter cannot provide by itself. If for Hegel this form of intelligibility refers to the Absolute, for Badiou it points to the illegal and heterogeneous materiality he calls the event.

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1972), 235.

2. There is an extensive critical bibliography on Hegel in France, however not a single line is devoted to Badiou, and his name is hardly mentioned. See Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Reflections in Twentieth Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 and 1999); Michael Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Michael Kelly, *Hegel in France* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1992); and Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2003).

3. For Jean Hyppolite's role in the reception of Hegel in France, see the Introduction by John Heckmann to Jean Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckmann (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), xv–xli.

4. Alain Badiou, Joël Bellassen, and Louis Mossot, *The Rational Kernel of Dialectics* (Melbourne: re-press, 2011), 101.

5. "Against those who made the relation between the dialectic, on the one hand, and Idealism or materialism, on the other hand, as a relation of mere 'mechanic assemblage' [*assemblage mécanique*], a point of view that was affirmed with force: we should rather understand, through the internal contradiction of Hegel's philosophy, a contradiction between its conservative and revolutionary aspect, between an idealist system and the 'rational kernel.' Instead of understanding his dialectic as a totality, *the dialectic divides into two*." Ibid., 18.

6. "J' énonce que les concepts d'événement, de structure, d' intervention et de fidélité sont les concepts mêmes de la dialectique, pour autant que celle-ci n'est pas ramenée à la plate image, inadéquate déjà pour Hegel, de la totalisation et du travail du négative." Badiou, *Peut-on penser la politique?* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 84.

7. Frederick Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 127. For J. F. Kervégan and P. Mabilie this is not an alternative. See their introduction to *Hegel au présent: un relève de la métaphysique?* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2012).

8. Here I am thinking particularly of Robert Pippin's recent *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014), a case study in which Hegel's philosophy of art is mobilized to read Manet's pictorial modernism.

9. It is true that in *Logics of the Worlds*, Badiou's doctrine of the event undergoes a major revision in which naming is no longer decisive, however the *Handbook of Inaesthetics* is articulated in terms of the doctrine of the event developed in *Being and Event*. For a detailed analysis of the changes the doctrine of the event underwent, see my "Living with an Idea: Ethics and Politics in Badiou's *Logiques des mondes*," in "Badiou and Law," a special issue of *Cardozo Law Review*, 28: 5, 2008.

10. See Alain Badiou, "Can Change Be Thought?," in *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions*, ed. Gabriel Riera (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), and Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

11. Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005), and *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008).

12. "Philosophy is possible, philosophy is necessary. And yet for it to be, it must be desired. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe says that History—he is thinking of Nazi barbarism—henceforth forbids us the desire of philosophy. I cannot grant him this. . . . Another way out is possible. To desire philosophy against history, to break with historicism. Philosophy then reappears as what it is, a bright opening of eternity [*une éclaircie d'éternité*], without God or soul, from the very fact that its effort put us in agreement with the following: that there are truths." Alain Badiou, "The (Re)-turn of Philosophy Itself" (MP 137).

13. Although the Sophist will be a constant enemy, the Poet's figure is more ambiguous, its function is always dual. The Poet is the enemy and the ally, the only "militant of the truth" who can name the "being" of the event.

14. "Language games, deconstruction, weak thought, radical heterogeneity, *différend* and differences, the ruin of Reason, promotion of the fragment, discourse reduced to shreds: all this argues in favor of a sophisticated line of thinking, and puts philosophy in a deadlock" (MP 20).

15. Badiou imports the notion of suture from the Lacanian field, particularly from the essay "*La Suture: Éléments pour une logique du signifiant*" by Jacques-Alain Miller and originally published in *Cahiers pour l'analyse* 1.3: 39. The essay is now available in Peter Hallward and Knox Peden (eds.), *Concept and Form, Volume 1. Key Texts from the Cahiers pour l'analyse* (Verso: London, 2013, 124–36). For Badiou, "suture" names the subordination of philosophy to only one of its conditions (for example, scientific discourse in the case of positivism). This subordination blocks the free circulation of philosophy. De-suturing is the operation of unblocking this subordination and re-establishing a free circulation between philosophy and the other domains. In the *Manifesto for Philosophy* Heidegger's suturing of the poem is the determining blockage. In *Metapolitics* Badiou states: "Philosophy, which requires the deployment of four conditions, cannot specialize in any one of them."

16. Badiou's reading of Mallarmé in *Being and Event* is exemplary.

17. I have dealt in detail with Heidegger's understanding of the poem in my *Intrigues: From Being to the Other* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006). Elsewhere I have shown that in spite of the differences between Heidegger and Badiou, the latter is close to the former in his philosophical use of the poem. If the German philosopher sees in Hölderlin the possibility for thinking the trace of "the absence of the gods," Badiou sees in Mallarmé's poem the possibility of thinking the vanishing trace of the event.

18. See Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds, Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, and *Plato's Republic*.

19. The argument of the "return to Plato" and of the "re-commencement of philosophy" dates from *Being and Event*, a book that marks a so-called "mathematical turn" in Badiou's thinking. The argument of the renewal of "materialist dialectic" is more

convoluted and discontinuous. It pre-dates the so-called mathematical turn of *Being and Event*; it disappears from the forefront in this major book only to explicitly reappear in *Logics of Worlds*. During the 1970s, and particularly in the essay “*Six propriétés de la vérité*,” *Ornicar?* 32 (1985): 39–67 and 33 (1985): 120–49, an essay that marks a bridge between a Maoist and a mathematically oriented thinking, Badiou proposed dispensing with “dialectical materialism” and to talk instead in terms of events or *cuts* that break a given analytic situation and fracture its language. There is no critical consensus on whether the latter is a constant in his thinking, only “obfuscated” by the massive logico-mathematical formalism of *Being and Event*. Hallward and Žižek have criticized Badiou for what they deemed to be a return to an undialectical way of positing the relationship between being and event, while Bosteels tends to see a continuity of sorts from the early “Maoist” writings to the most recent formulations, one whose bridge would be *Theory of the Subject*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Continuum, 2009). See Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 2009), Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), and Bruno Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

20. *Théorie de la contradiction* (1975), *De l'idéologie* (1976), and *Le noyau rationnel de la dialectique hégélienne* (1978).

21. “Il y a dans Hegel, et c'est ce qui fait la fameuse histoire de la gangue et du noyau une douteuse énigme, deux matrices dialectiques. C'est le noyau lui-même qui est fendu, comme dans ces pêches, du reste irritantes à manger, dont un coup de dents fêle aussitôt l'objet dur intérieur en deux moitiés pivotantes.” Alain Badiou, *Le noyau rationnel de la dialectique hégélienne* (Paris: La Découverte, 1978), 21.

22. I have dealt with the basic axiomatic of set theory that underwrites *Being and Event* in the “Introduction” to *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions*. The interpretations of Badiou's notion of the event tend either to stress the eruptive force of the new, a sort of *caesura*, or the connection between the event and the situation. *Being and Event* seems to authorize both since at times Badiou emphasizes one or the other. This oscillation becomes less perceptible in *Logics of Worlds*.

23. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. J. N. Findlay and W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), § 8.

24. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George DiGiovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

25. For Badiou, infinity is one of the names of the multiple. Badiou theorizes infinity in terms of set theory, the so-called alephs (\aleph). A limit ordinal is an ordinal for which any successor allows to introduce between itself and the limit it is itself an infinity of other successors. More precisely, the sequence of the successors of an ordinal belongs to this limit ordinal, deploys itself within this limit ordinal. Of a limit ordinal it cannot be said that a successor is closer or farther away from it. Thenceforth one posits the idea of a minimal limit ordinal that Cantor calls aleph-zero. An ordinal is finite if it belongs to the minimal ordinal limit. It is infinite if it is the aleph-zero or if it belongs to it. The infinite is multiple and not conceived under the form of the One or the Whole. For a technical demonstration, see Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, section 6, and *Number and Numbers*.

26. Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Polity Press, 2007), 158.

27. In Badiou, insofar as the poem is the dominant paradigm, the end of aesthetics is called “the end of the age of poets.”

28. Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1.

29. For the technical demonstration, see *Being and Event*, Meditation 31.

30. Alain Badiou, “Troisième esquisse d'un manifeste de l'affirmationnisme,” in *Circonstances* 2 (Paris: Éditeur Leo Sheer, 2004), 99.

31. "La vérité dont l'art est le processus est toujours vérité du sensible, en tant que sensible. Ce qui veut dire: transformation du sensible en événement de l'Idée," *Circonstances* 2, 100.

32. Friedrich W. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 230. Hereafter parenthetically cited as STT.

33. "The Oldest Systematic Programme of German Idealism," in *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, ed. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5.

34. F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Scott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 11. Hereafter parenthetically cited as PA.

35. For Schelling, there is one essence, one absolute and indivisible reality. *Potenzen* refers to the ideal determinations of the variations among things.

36. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundriss* (Verlag: Hamburg, 1969), § 556. Hereafter parenthetically cited as E.

37. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*, trans. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), § 131, 197.

38. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

39. Alain Badiou, "Third Draft of a Manifesto of Affirmationism," *Lacanian Ink*, 24–25 (2005), 104.

II

Badiou *With* Hegel

FIVE

Badiou with Hegel: Preliminary Remarks on A(ny) Contemporary Reading of Hegel

Frank Ruda

INTRODUCTION: BADIOU'S UNKNOWN HEGEL

Alain Badiou is well-known as a fierce critic of Hegel.¹ Badiou remarks about politics: "There are two ways of rescuing the idea of communism in philosophy today; either by abandoning Hegel, not without regret, incidentally and only after repeated considerations of his writings (which is what I do), or by putting forward a different Hegel, an unknown Hegel . . ."² Badiou opts to abandon Hegel, however it is not easy to grasp the very reasons for this abandonment (at least if one seeks to avoid certain enduring clichés about Hegel). One can easily observe that all of Badiou's criticisms of Hegel are linked to a certain stage of the development of Badiou's own system. In the following essay my main task will be to understand the reasons for abandoning Hegel. This is a crucial, complicated, technical, and necessary step, not only to understand more precisely Badiou's own position but also to map out the coordinates for any contemporary reading of Hegel that does not wish to relapse into what Badiou develops, especially in terms of potential political consequences. The general thrust of my argument is simple: Badiou is right—and this is crucial—to criticize Hegel, and the Hegel Badiou attacks should be (almost certainly) abandoned, but what if there is a Hegel that is unknown to Badiou?³ What if there is a Hegel who can serve as a very useful, maybe even necessary, supplement to Badiou? Ultimately, I will argue for why, after Badiou's reading of Hegel, one needs a new, another

Hegel, one that might be read as being completely in line with Badiou's line of thinking.

But why do we need such a reading? Badiou himself compares our contemporary (political) situation to the 1840s, which is to say that we are in the same position as Marx and others were when it comes to the formulation of a new hypothesis of emancipation. Yet, he claimed in his *Pocket Pantheon* about Lacan—in a republished text from the 1970s—that “for a French Marxist today Lacan functions like Hegel did for the German revolutionaries of 1840.”⁴ But if we are again in the same situation that Marx and the German revolutionaries were in the 1840s, I would like to suggest that what is of utmost importance today is a return to Hegel. Of course, this can be no simple return to orthodox Hegelianism, mindless rationalism, pan-logicism, or even pragmatist Neo-Hegelianism, and so on. The very idea of re-reading Hegel, after Badiou, could, in this context, also be linked to the famous anecdote of what Lenin did in 1914: he withdrew to a lonely place in Switzerland and read Hegel's *Logic*. And in some sense, after the failures of communism, why not repeat this very Leninist gesture?⁵ This gesture could even help us to remain faithful to Badiou.⁶ Why? Because one might argue that Badiou has, up until today, never read anything but Hegel's *Science of Logic*. His early work, *Theory of the Subject*, addresses the beginning of the *Logic*, namely, “Being-There”; *Being and Event* starts off—“crossing swords with Hegel”—from the last part of the logic of “Being-There,” that is, from Hegel's exploration of the dialectics of good and bad infinity. Only *Logics of Worlds* seems not to stand in the line of this trajectory. For, Badiou claims that *Being and Event* is his very own *Science of Logic* and that *Logics of Worlds* represents his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (LW 8). But one should never forget that Hegel's *Phenomenology* was the very precondition for his *Science of Logic* (and in his “Phenomenology” Badiou does indeed solely discuss Hegel's *Logic* and not his *Phenomenology*). In any case it can be stated that each stage of Badiou's intellectual development is accompanied by a reading of yet another part of Hegel's *Logic*.⁷ The main focus lies thus on the *Logic*. I take Badiou's working-through of Hegel's *Logic* to offer us the elements with which we can formulate the precondition for any re-actualized, that is, contemporary, reading of Hegel.

Beginning with Hegel: An Unconscious Materialist

The first text in which Badiou struggles with Hegel (in 1978)⁸ addresses a passage that might be considered to be one of the most crucial ones and at the same time one of the most obscure in Hegel's work, namely, the very beginning of his *Science of Logic*. Badiou never takes up this criticism again, almost imitating Hegel's own gesture, since Hegel never altered the very beginning of the *Logic*, even when he reworked it in his later years. But Badiou's comments are highly important, for the begin-

ning in Hegel prefigures all that follows, and in some sense Badiou's reading will also determine all his subsequent criticisms of Hegel. How does Badiou's critique unfold? He reads the beginning of Hegel's text by first acknowledging that Hegel does not begin the beginning with a simple one, with one simple term, for example, being. Hegel starts in a two-fold manner: he begins with being and nothing. "The commencement for Hegel will then be understood as the position of the same term twice" (RK 51). This is to say, Hegel starts from two terms that, because they both lack determination, can be said neither to be identical nor, at the same time, different. As Hegel wonderfully puts it: "They are not undistinguished."⁹ Badiou continues to state that it is precisely this repeated positing of two terms, this gesture that everything begins with "two names for the void" (RK 52) that constitutes a fundamental problem. Why? Because there is no true difference between them (they are not different, although they are not simply identical), their relation is "the weakest sort of difference" (RK 51): a difference that is derived only from the very position the two terms take, namely, it is *first* being and *then* nothing. Therefore, the beginning constitutes two terms as being a *two of One* series. Therefore, the two dissipate into one another precisely because there is no strong difference between them. Everything seems to begin with a *Two*: two terms, two places. However, two positions of a term do not manifest a proper two, no qualitative difference. Being from the very beginning stands in a relation to nothing and nothing is somehow related¹⁰ to being.

There seems to be a strong difference (being and nothing have nothing in common as neither of them have any determination, which they could have in common), but there is none (as what makes them different is precisely what makes them pass over into one another: *being undetermined* they end up *being nothing* but *the same*). For Badiou, in Hegel's beginning, one ends up with a quantitative two, a two of one series, a repression of the qualitative Two. Hegel's two embodies a serial movement (Badiou states there is "a certain idea of movement") of *One* thing, of "the same" (RK 51) posited twice—this double positing is what makes the movement possible. If this were all, Badiou would have demonstrated that Hegel is a philosopher of the One, thus an (substantialist) idealist and doomed to fail. But things are not that simple. For, although Hegel seems to repress strong difference, he nonetheless constantly refers to it. As Badiou continues to argue: "Suppose that a marking occurs in a space of inscriptions: the commencement—right away, another term is retroactively constituted: the blank on which this mark has just been inscribed. Once a mark is inscribed, it establishes that on which it marks" (RK 52). There is not only a twofold positing of terms (being and nothing in the same series), but there is also, with this very act of positing, a commencement, an indication of the very space in which this positing takes place. One thus not only ends up with a simple repression of the Two, but with two

diverging perspectives on the beginning, a proper *parallax*. There is a two that collapses back into the One (being and nothing occurring in one series and implying a movement of the same), which is supplemented by a qualitative Two, which amounts to claiming that the second term of the series marks more than just another term of the series: it also and at the same time marks the space, where this very series is inscribed, that is, something not-of the series. Thus we have a *repression of the Two and a return of the repressed*.

Badiou now argues the problem is that these *two Twos*¹¹ (the quantitative of being and nothing and the qualitative of being and the space where it is posited) are identical, both are decipherable from the name “nothing.” There appear to be two Twos, but there is One. Badiou thereby basically asserts that the very beginning of Hegel’s *Logic* is *not dialectical*; rather, it is based on iteration and repetition (first of the One, then of the Two as One). As soon as Hegel begins with being, the question where being begins arises, since the very act of positing refers to a locus of its positing. The mark silently refers back to the space of its marking.¹² This “retroactive causality” (RK 52) generates the necessity of marking the space of the marking itself, which is what the name “nothing” does, and this makes it, as Badiou claims, possible for Hegel to continue with the same logic endlessly.¹³ For, after “being,” comes the first mark, and “nothing” is marking what this mark is lacking, that is, the space of marking, their very difference (i.e., the difference between two marks), remains unmarked (there is only a mark of the beginning and the marking of the space of the beginning). Hegel will mark the difference between these two marks (of mark and space of marking) with the name “becoming” (that follows “being” and then “nothing”). He thus relies on the idea that “there is always somewhere a void place, an unmarked” and generates infinitely new marks from this very “set of voids” (RK 53). The *Science of Logic*, for Badiou, thus does not depict a splitting of One into Two (i.e., a “scission of identify”); rather, it privileges *repetition over dialectics* and as dialectics is the kernel of all materialist and rational thought, Hegel ends up being an idealist as he cannot account, amongst other things, for true change (change is identical to iteration). For the early Badiou, what dialectics, understood as the true thought or motor of change, crucially relies upon is contradiction. Thus, to counter Badiou’s criticism, Hegel would have to have a conception of contradiction. But does one exist?

Badiou asserts that repetition “is not the only motor here [in the beginning]” (RK 53) and this becomes intelligible through the category of becoming. Becoming is (1) another term generated by repetition, it follows being and nothing; it marks their (non-) difference. Therefore, (2) it can be defined as the transition of being into nothing and vice versa (they have no determinate difference distinguishing them from one another, and so they collapse into one another). But as they are simultaneously not

simply identical but also absolutely different (the mark is not the space of its inscription), “becoming” is not simply a mark marking the yet unmarked difference between two terms in a series (of the same) and becoming does not only take the transition of one into the other into account: it further indicates a “becoming-unity of contraries” (RK 53). If one has a repression of the qualitative Two in the twofold beginning as well as the return of the repressed, what becoming here marks is the becoming unity of repression (being and nothing as two elements of one series) and of its return. Again, in “becoming,” we have a Two but only such that it immediately disappears as soon as it is thought—thinking the Two in Hegel amounts to its vanishing, to erasing its traces. This is why “Hegel makes place for contradiction” (*ibid.*). Yet, “something of the Hegelian enterprise fails here.” What is it that fails? “Nothing less than the attempt to generate the concept (in this case, a concept that integrates the idea of contradiction, namely becoming) in continuity with the one (pure being . . .), the immediate, and the surrender to the life of the object” (*ibid.*). Badiou maintains that Hegel does not simply assign one function to becoming but two. This is why, when reading the *Logic* with Badiou, and one expects nothing but “the sterile operation of coordinated iteration,” there is something “like a *clinamen*” (RK 54).

Even when there seems to be only one logic—the logic of iteration generating new terms by marking the yet unmarked—there are, in fact, two. Beginning with Hegel’s beginning, one constantly oscillates between One splitting into two and Two merging into One, between materialism and idealism. Badiou claims that Hegel saw the danger of fusing everything into the One of iteration: He “saw the constraint of going about this with unsanctioned force” (*ibid.*); this is why what appears to be a failure of inference in the presentation of becoming is actually Hegel inscribing something that cannot be derived from repetition, namely, contradiction, which is heterogeneous to iteration. Within the continuity of the logic of iteration, as Badiou claims, one thus finds a discontinuity. Thus one seems to arrive at a true Two. But problems reoccur. “To becoming, Hegel assigns the role of being the pivot of this toggling, but the whole contradiction of the project will be re-concentrated upon it” (*ibid.*). Why? If there is iteration on one side (quantitative two, marking of the yet unmarked), there is contradiction on the other, and it is like the effect of a *clinamen* that these two align under the logic of iteration and not contradiction. The very maneuver of the beginning is here repeated once again. One seems to have a strong difference, a radical heterogeneity in the determination of “becoming” as marking the unmarked (difference) and as marking that which is neither mark nor unmarked. However, becoming obscures the very strong difference between the two of them, because with becoming one moves from the mark and the yet unmarked to the very operation of marking itself. *Hegel conceives of the operation of marking as being itself markable.* The contradiction thus lies in the fact that Hegel

treats this new mark (becoming) as just another mark, yet at the same time he sees that this cannot be the case (as it is not yet marked as the very operation of marking that enters the scene).

Hence, for Badiou, Hegel assigns two contradictory results to becoming: (1) It results in the stability of a process (i.e., the continuation of iteration); (2) It results in the vanishing of being and nothing (each dissolve into the other), and it also results in the vanishing of this very act of vanishing (i.e., instability). Becoming in Hegel is the unification of the contradiction of stability and instability, and this is why Badiou claims that the unity of contraries (mark and operation of marking mediating the mark and its space) comes in the form of a new concept, which also enters onto the scene with becoming, namely, "sublation." What happens in Hegel is happening like a clinamen because the very perspective from which one could observe the operation of marking itself that is supposed to provide the ground for the unity of contraries can neither be deduced from the mark nor from the space with which everything begins. Sublated becoming leads into a depiction of an equilibrium of being and nothing and also leads into the vanishing of being in nothing and vice versa and, therefore, into the vanishing of these twofold vanishing movements, implying that there can be no equilibrium, for the vanishing of vanishing and the iteration of stability fundamentally contradict one another. Nonetheless Hegel claims, following Badiou, one is here dealing with one and the same thing, namely, sublation of being and nothing, and one is therefore again knee-deep in the logic of iteration. In sum, according to Badiou, Hegel, on one hand, claims that the sublation of the logic of iteration is itself derivable from the same logic, and, on the other hand, he indicates, by affirming discontinuity and instability, that this cannot be the case. He seems to come close to accounting for change (i.e., overcoming iteration through contradiction), but he does not really assert what he is asserting. Thus contradiction persists: *a contradiction whose precise place is between contradiction and iteration*. Hegel fails for Badiou because he pretends that he can unify and merge the two in one single concept: sublation. It is again akin to the very beginning: a logic of the Two and then a repression of it. Hegel for Badiou is thus a philosopher not so much of totality but mostly—at least in terms of what he seeks to attain—a philosopher of "a fundamental identity" (RK 56), namely, the identity of contradiction and iteration. Hegel, then, obscures the insight into the distinction between contradiction and iteration, which cannot be treated neutrally or sublated in one concept without opting for iteration.

There is, for Badiou, no unity of the contraries of iteration and contradiction; this is why he affirms contradiction as a precondition for materialism (i.e., the true thought of change). *Hegel's greatness is to constantly point at that which he represses*. But for Badiou, Hegel—necessarily and subjectively—opts either for contradiction or for iteration. What Hegel does without saying it—maybe even unwillingly—is that he ultimately

endorses iteration by asserting that there can be one concept that includes both. The unfolding of his objective logic (of the beginning) is thereby grounded on a repression of this subjective choice, of the qualitative Two (between iteration and contradiction). Badiou claims that Hegel thus endorses the objective One as he seeks to do away with the decision between contradiction and iteration to which he constantly hints. Hegel is thus an *unconscious materialist* in that he constantly employs defense mechanisms against the return of his own repressed. In reading Hegel, one can learn how defense mechanisms against the qualitative Two (of the contradiction between contradiction and iteration) work, and therefore reading Hegel is paramount to grasping what needs to be overcome (and abandoned) in order to think true historical transformation. For the early Badiou, *Hegel is an unconscious materialist as his thought embodies the contradiction between contradiction and the repetitive defense against it.*

The Dasein of a Christian Materialist

Consistent with the foregoing analysis is Badiou's second reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, with which he begins his 1982 *Theory of the Subject*. This early text starts from the claim that "there are two dialectical matrices in Hegel" (TS 3), such that there can be no "secondary unity" unifying the two. This very assessment of Hegel, again, amounts to the claim that "Hegel is a materialist!" (ibid.). But what are these matrices? One focuses on alienation, becoming-other, and conceptual sublation, and the other concentrates on scission and ends, culminating in the insight that there is no unity that is not split. One finds here a schematism between the logic of iteration and its contradictory relation to the logic of contradiction. Badiou does not return to the beginning of the *Logic*; rather, he proceeds to the next chapter, the one on being-there (*Dasein*), on "something." What he elaborates is how Hegel accounts for the idea that "the multiple proceed from the One" (TS 4)—how, in other words, quantity can be derived when one begins, as Hegel does, with quality. Badiou's aim is to show how this very question is answered in a manner that makes Hegel into "the modern conjurer of th[e] ecclesiastical question," namely, of the question how "God, the absolute form of the One, was able to pulverize a universe of such lasting multiplicity" (TS 4–5). In other words, Hegel is a materialist because he aligns *two irreconcilable logics*, but he is, in his very materialism, a Christian thinker.

Why Christian? Because the very logic previously linked to iteration is now conceptually embodied into what Badiou refers to as Christianity: the release of multiplicity from the One and the returning ascent of this very multiplicity to the One. The problem remains the same, even if its articulation changes. It is no longer articulated as a question of whether Hegel can think change through contradiction; rather, one has to ask whether Hegel can think actual multiplicity without reducing it to the

logic of the one and the same (i.e., iteration). It is only from thinking multiplicity that an adequate conception of change and transformation, and subsequently history, can be gained. Hegel does assert the two, yet represses it. Does he do the same with multiplicity?

Badiou's most crucial claim is that "Hegel is going to study the scission of the something in a movement that is pre-structured by a first scission, which is in a way hidden because it is essentially repetitive" (TS 5). This is what he also refers to as the "structural skeleton" (TS 6) of the qualitative. One thing—any something—is placed twice (recall being and nothing). But now this logic somehow changes, since Badiou claims that the very repetition of something as something and something-else (an other) is the constitutive split between what he refers to as "A as such" and "A in another place" (ibid.). This means that any something (even Hegel) is the split between the something as such and something placed somewhere. This is what follows for being-there from the very beginning of the *Logic*. But we are here not dealing with how things begin, but precisely how things gain a determination (not with revolution but with the day after, so to speak). Determination (*Bestimmung*) enters by means of the effect that the place in which something occurs has on the something as such. This is to say we have to start from a determinate something (i.e., something placed) and conceive of it as being the very split between something as such and something according to its place.

Two distributive options can be inferred: the first one is *determination proper* (something gains a determination due to the place where it occurs); the second one is what Badiou with Hegel calls a *relapse* (something is simply considered as occurring in one place, where the something as such is repressed and, thus, there is nothing but the place as such, or something as such is conceived without considering the place where it occurs, i.e., in its purity). There is for Badiou a *primordial contradiction* between the space where something is placed¹⁴ and the something as such. This very contradiction never appears; rather, what appears is always only a contradictory unity (something as split between how it is as such and how it is according to its place), implying determination (derived from the effect the place has on the something) from where a *strict determination* is derived (the something according to its place gives rise to a determination of the something as such, this time re-determining the place). Badiou continues to analyze this dialectical sequence by stating that after primordial contradiction, constitutive scission, determination, and strict determination, there is also what Hegel calls *limitation* and *limit*.

Limitation is the re-application of the something as such, which Badiou also calls *force*, on the very determination that its place has on itself. This is to say if the space of places can never be said to be all there is (since there is something placed in it), the something can resist the determination it receives from its place and can re-determine itself. This very

act of “torsion” (TS 11; 148–158), re-determining the determination the something receives from the place where it occurs, has a certain and always historically specific limit. This limit is the space of the places. Thus one never gets rid of all determining effects of the space wherein something is placed; there is no absolute purity. So, any being-there implies scission as the mode of existence of contradiction. This may sound materialist, however, for Badiou, there is a problem: the very re-determination of the determining effect the something receives from the place, that is the encounter with the limit, is where the very beginning, namely, the constitutive scission of the something into itself as such and into itself as being placed, re-occurs, i. e., is repeated. Badiou calls this “Hegelian circularity” (TS 49). It is what makes Hegel into a Christian and prevents him from thinking historical specificity and historical transformation proper. For, he relies on a dialectic of determination and re-determination that does not know true multiplicity, which for Badiou is the prerequisite to truly think different historical situations and change occurring in them. The multiple is only an “effect of the time required for the concept,” an effect of the “self-exposure through which the absolute arrives at the completely unfolded contemplation of itself” (TS 5). The circularity—Hegel’s theological kernel—lies in the idea of mediating the finite (the space of the places) and the infinite, namely, God (something as such placed within it). “God . . . is indexed . . . as specific out-place of the splace” (TS 15), that is, that which is not finite occurs within the finite world: the something as such is God as father, the something placed is the Son, Christ appearing in the world of the humans. Therefore the infinite (God-father) receives a determination by the very scission into father and son. However, the something as such, God, re-determines itself by overcoming the determination of finitude, which names the resurrection of Christ.

The Son—the something according to its place—is resurrected and rejoins the father, which is to say all that we obtain after Christ’s advent (the infinite being inscribed into the world of finitude), his death (determination), and resurrection (re-determination of determination) is “only the pure scission of the Father and the Son as integral concept of the redemptive absolute” (TS 17–18). The problem that Badiou addresses also belongs to how Hegelian dialectic stands with regard to the question of finitude and infinity. And the most crucial question is: How does “the dialectical fragment . . . continue?” (TS 18). Hegel opts for circularity—that is, iteration, which abolishes any true continuation, whereas Badiou states “we will oppose (materialist) periodization,” an early version of what he now calls “sequence”¹⁵—rather than for “(idealist) circularity” (TS 18). If one opts for circularity, one basically claims that what is attained in a dialectical move is nothing more than what was already there from the very immediate beginning (the split between the finite and the infinite, the constitutive scission). Whereas, what previously was labeled

“contradiction” is now articulated by Badiou as “the pure passage from one sequence to the other . . . where the truth of the first stage gives itself to begin with only as the condition of the second as fact without leading back to anything other than the unfolding of this fact” (TS 19). Hegel’s conception of history—Badiou likes to refer to the formula: “time is the being-there of the concept”¹⁶—therefore ends up not only being circular but also actually prevents thought itself from achieving a true historical dimension. What one ends up thinking, Badiou says, is that in Hegel *history does not exist*.¹⁷ But, it does not exist other than the unfolding of the one concept whose history is history. For Badiou, Hegel claims that there is One history (of the unfolding of the concept), which implies that there is no true history (everything in time is a part of unfolding the one concept). Badiou’s criticism can be understood in the following manner: the conception of history developed by Hegel is (1) not historical itself and, therefore, (2) it becomes religious, Christian, which implies that (3) Hegel is a thinker of the One, namely, the one God. (4) This implies that Hegel cannot account for true multiplicity, since he has a circular conception of the relation between infinity and finitude and, therefore, (5) he again prefers repetition to true historical transformation. He simply likes the old (good old Father) more than the new (Sons). We have before us so many devastating charges, and up until now Badiou has only read the first one and a half chapters of the *Science of Logic*. He will turn to the second half of the second chapter, to the infamous discussion of bad and good infinity in his *Being and Event*.

Beyond Good and Bad: Hegel’s De-cision

It will take Badiou six more years to return to reading the *Logic*. After criticizing Hegel’s beginning of the *Logic* and his account of being-there, he then addresses what *Theory of the Subject* prepared: the issue of infinity. It is no surprise, then, that this discussion appears in Meditation 15 of *Being and Event*¹⁸ under the more general heading of “Being: Nature and Infinity.” Badiou is still reading the *Logic* and he is still in the first book, stuck in the second chapter.¹⁹ He frames his debate with Hegel as a struggle between Hegel’s “generative ontology” (BE 163) and his own “subtractive ontology” (ibid.). He claims that “for subtractive ontology, infinity is a *decision* (of ontology), whilst for Hegel it is a *law*” (ibid.). This clearly formulates the general scope of all the criticisms leveled thus far: *Badiou criticizes Hegel for his ontological proposal*. Hegel endorses the idea that being is linked to a law (and any law must be based on repeatability, otherwise it would not be a law), whereas Badiou seeks to establish that any ontology proper acknowledges that one cannot ascribe any form of law to being.

Hegel is thus too *objective* when depicting being, whereas the adequate position consists rather in formalizing the necessity of a *subjective*

decision in any ontology (as elaborated above). Yet, in *Being and Event*, again, the articulation of this point changes, since it deals with the peculiar problem of the conception of infinity that aligning being and law brings about. Badiou offers a straightforward yet complicated account of this problem by reconstructing Hegel's conception of good infinity in five steps: (1) Something is something because there is something which it is not. Therefore, the something is in a differential relationship to others (other somethings), which makes it possible to conceive of the something as one. Why? Because there is one something which is not-all-the-other-somethings. (2) This would simply amount to the claim that the oneness of something is derived from its external relations (to other somethings). But to treat the oneness as an intrinsic attribute of the something, Hegel infers that there is a form of totalization of all-the-others that neglects their specificity and particularity while emptying them of all qualities. Therefore, the oneness of the something is immanent to the something against the "void space" (BE 166) that is generated by this totalizing act. Thus, there is a voiding totalization that provides the condition of possibility for an immanentization of oneness. (3) But the something also immanentized the (voided) non-quality of the other somethings, and thus also internalizes the non-being that is outside of itself. It thereby encounters not only a limit (the emptied-out space of all the other somethings is the limit of the something) but also a(n) (internal) limitation: something internally encounters something-other that it sought to overcome. This leads (4) to externalizing the something into the voided space wherein the same movement is endlessly repeated. This is what Hegel calls bad infinity. It is bad because it is only potentially infinite, progressing endlessly from the overcoming of one limitation to the overcoming of the next. An endless repetition of the four points delineated. But then there is the last point: (5) the insight into the "presence and the law of repetition" (BE 166).

This presence is the very alternating movement of positing a limit and overcoming it as a mere limitation (a finite limit that re-inscribes determination and infinite limitation that is related to the void) of the external determination of the something, which is internalized. The internally external, then, is overcome. But how to name this law, this very movement between finitude and infinity, which is bad infinity, "since pure presence as relation to itself is, at this point, the void itself" (ibid.)? The name for this law is drawn from the very void that this movement is—a movement of the void, which is the constant emptying out of all fixed determinations (of something). The very name Hegel comes up with—his name for the void—is infinity, good infinity. But, "[h]owever heroic the effort, it is *interrupted de facto* by the exteriority itself of the pure multiple" (BE 169). Again, Hegel tries to cover up the very disjunction, which this movement constantly depicts. His distinction of bad and good infinity thus needs to be read as an assertion of two different types of infinity that, although

Hegel seems to affirm their difference, he treats as though they were identical by assigning one name “infinity” to the two of them (such that “bad” and “good” are mere names for an internal difference). *Hegel identifies the void and infinity*—its very movement is good infinity—something Badiou challenges by separating the two.²⁰ The void and infinity both need to be affirmed as existing, yet they are not identical. Badiou therefore thinks “[i]t is at this point that the Hegelian enterprise encounters, as its real, the impossibility of pure disjunction” (BE 169).

One could say that Hegel can think the identity of that which is identical and he can think the identity of that which seems different (the identity of something and something-else); he can also think the difference of that which is different (the something is like the something-else but it is *not* the something-else). But “[w]hat Hegel cannot think is the difference between the same and the same, that is, the pure position of two letters” (ibid.). Hegel, according to Badiou, identifies the identity of that which is different and the difference of that which is different (both are called infinity) and thereby neglects another crucial option. In pure distributive terms: if one starts from difference and identity, one has the identity of the identical, the identity of the different, the difference of the different, and Hegel simply forgets the difference of the identical. He can think the immanence of immanence, also the immanence of externality, and the externality of immanence, but he cannot think the externality of externality and, therefore, cannot account for how external that which remains inside the something, even when internalized, is.

Hegel cannot think the Other-ness of the other, which, as Badiou argues, cannot be derived from one logic, but only through a decision: “nothing can save us here from making a decision which, in one go, disjoins the place of the Other from any insistence of same-others” (BE 169ff.). One cannot, as I read Badiou, derive actual (good) infinity from the movement of potential (bad) infinity, unless one takes the decision. If one refrains from doing so, or if one represses and obfuscates the decision one has taken, this ends in “a properly Hegelian hallucination . . .” (ibid.). Hegel’s dialectical inferring of the dialectics of infinity misses one crucial point: *there is no dialectics of the infinite; the infinite is a decision*. He is once again charged with privileging repetition. But here this is articulated by Badiou as Hegel being too rationalistic, objectivist. Hegel is a rationalist who does not see that even rationalism implies a constitutive decision. The infinity of the rational can only be upheld if it is decided for. Hegel thus falls back into the bad infinity of the dialectics of good and bad infinity. Breaking up the dynamics of bad infinity implies subjective decision (i.e., a Two).²¹ The decision of abandoning Hegel is motivated by his own refusal of decision (which implies the obfuscation of decision and an obscuring of its necessity).

Badiou moves from criticizing Hegel as a proponent of the primacy of iteration over contradiction to a criticism of the circularity of Hegelian

dialectics, which neglects history and multiplicity, and in *Being and Event* all of this is re-articulated as a criticism of Hegel's repression of an unavoidable (although *objectively* impossible²²), already-made *subjective decision*. Therefore, it is consistent that the last treatment of Hegel that we find in *Logics of Worlds* seeks "to examine the consequences of an axiom so radically opposed to the inaugural axiom of this book" (LW 159). Hegel *versus* Badiou is a challenge of decisions, a struggle of repressing decision or formalizing its (impossible) necessity.

The End of Hegel

Any axiom or decision, even if unacknowledged, produces consequences. The same goes for Hegel, as Badiou argues. This is why seventeen years after *Being and Event*, *Logics of Worlds* moves to the very end of the *Science of Logic* (skipping over more than seven hundred pages) and offers a discussion of the very outcome of the Hegelian method. Here the claim "Hegel's first word is 'being as concrete totality'" (LW 144) becomes absolutely crucial. Badiou can derive, then, the fundamental distinction between two types of consequential settings: "the triple of the Whole: the immediate, or the-thing-according-to-its-being; mediation, or the-thing-according-to-its-essence. . . . The triple of the non-Whole, which we advocate, is as follows: indifferent multiplicities, or ontological unbinding; worlds of appearing, or the logical link; truth-procedures, or subjective eternity" (ibid.). Badiou can reconstruct the crucial difference between *two ontological axioms*—the whole is, the whole is not—as a difference that manifests in the *two sets of consequences*. At stake is a distinction between *two dialectical conceptions*. "Hegel remarks that the complete thinking of the triple of the Whole makes four. This is because the Whole itself, as immediacy-of-the-result, still lies beyond its own dialectical construction. Likewise, so that truths (the third term, thought) may supplement worlds (the second term, logic), whose being is the pure multiple (the first term, ontology), we need a vanishing cause, which is the exact opposite of the Whole: an abolished flash, which we call the event, and which is the fourth term" (ibid.).

For Badiou, there is, as for Hegel, in the beginning, an immediate, which reappears as the result (i.e., unfolds in its consequences). However, it can neither be a law nor being (to claim this is Hegel's failed decision). It is neither negation nor negation of negation; it is *an event, which will have been what it will have been* through the very procedures that it enables and which unfolds its consequences (this is why an event is the *paradoxical entity which belongs to itself*). It is not a law or being, as this is what does not happen objectively; rather, it happens in extra-philosophical, subjective practices, that is, in love, art, politics, and science, which all condition philosophical thought. With the shift in the fourth term, every-

thing (in the dialectical conception) changes; it is not being but an *illegal supplement* to it.

Thus, the disagreement does not only affect the status of the fourth term, but the whole dialectical conception. Badiou claims Hegel ends up defending totality, as he thinks that what is unfolded and thus repeated is being itself, whose law is to appear. What thus needs to be thought are the laws of being in relation to appearance. Badiou *a contrario* asserts that within a different ontological proposal one also has a different conception of thought (thought under the condition of the unlawful event) and thus also a different conception of what and how to conceive of the very logic of appearances. He maintains that Hegel's "assertion that being-there is 'essentially being-other' requires a logical arrangement that will lead—via the exemplary dialectic between being-for-another-thing and being-in-itself—towards the concept of reality" (LW 145), which is Hegel's name for appearance. Badiou does sustain the Hegelian idea "that the moment of the reality of a being is that in which being, locally effectuated as being-there, is identity with itself and with others, as well as difference from itself and from others. Hegel proposes a superb formula, which declares that 'Being-there as reality is the differentiation of itself into being-in-itself and being-for-another-thing'" (LW 145ff.). Thus "the agreement between our thinking and Hegel's is so manifest here" (LW 146), since Badiou is also proclaiming that it is being that appears. However, he does challenge Hegel's underlying assumption that appearing *is* a law of being, and therefore—this is the definition of the law—fundamentally, there can only be one way of appearing. Hegel *versus* Badiou: appearance is another way (for Badiou) of opposing, on one hand, the claim that there can only be one world, one logic of appearances (Hegel) and, on the other hand, the idea that there are multiple worlds, logics of worlds (Badiou), which has to be asserted for "the essence of the world not to be the totality of existence, and to endure the existence of an infinity of other worlds outside of itself" (LW 146ff.).

A further crucial point made by Badiou concerns the very status of negation in this context: "For Hegel, there can neither be a minimal (or zero) determination of the identity between two beings nor an absolute difference between two beings" (LW 147)—he thus cannot mark the difference between the same and the same (in this respect, his system is a strange mixture of ontological classicism, that is, the classical form of negation, phenomenological intuitionism, and the latter's form of negation²³), whereas Hegel thinks that "we do not exhibit anything as 'One and the same thing.' It might turn out that in a given world two beings will appear as absolutely unequal. There can be Twos-without-One (. . . this is the great problem of amorous truths)" (LW 149). Hegel is guilty of the "axiomatic solution, which puts the negative at the very origin of appearing that "cannot satisfy us" (LW 151), since he is forced to make appearance itself into a law, the law of the negative inscribed into being.

This implies the abandonment not only of contingency (of the transcendental ordering) of any concrete world, but the law also falls short in its account of difference proper, for a Two without a One, for difference as difference. In Hegel, the Law (of the One) and the One (of the Law) prevails.

Coda: After the Abandonment—Hegel and the Immanence of Truth

Hegel is abandoned by Badiou as he is a proponent of a *one-world theory* in which *one being* appears according to *one law* (of the negative), which is grounded in his denial or, rather, in the masking of any form of (true, ontologically classic) decision and he thus simply cannot account for multiplicity, true difference, history, and anything but repetition. This claim results from Badiou's reading Hegel's *Logic*. Yet, what if Hegel's *Logic* is not, as Badiou suggests, depicting the law of being and its outcomes, but rather what Badiou himself would call a truth procedure, a procedure of subjectivization and thought?²⁴

When Badiou states that any forced decision, understood, as a response to an event has immediate consequences, what I am suggesting is to read Hegel's *Science of Logic* such that it depicts this very immediate realm of consequences by elaborating how any thought—if it is thought—evolves, namely, with the immediate identity and difference without determination and relation of being and nothing (i.e., with what Badiou calls an event). The *Science of Logic* then depicts how something is generated from an event and expounds it by unfolding the formal structure of becoming (i.e., the becoming of a subject). It thus gives the formal depiction of a procedure that, although constantly threatened by falling back into bad infinite repetition, still relies on something actually infinite (which Badiou himself would refer to under the heading of "truth"); an actual infinity that does operate according to a different type of repetition (the new is always the old—this is why truths are eternal—in another form) and generates a new form—one new—world of appearances. One could then take Hegel, thus, to follow Badiou's idea that "thought is the mode a human animal is traversed and overcome by a truth"²⁵ and the *Science of Logic* could be read as delineating the very advent and the *very (subjective) immanence of truth*.²⁶ Badiou can provide the very background against which one should start to read Hegel anew. He is justified in his criticism of Hegel's *Logic* as ontological dialectics, but everything changes when Hegel is considered to do something other than what Badiou thinks he does. A slight shift of perspective that changes everything: so, why not read Hegel as theorist of the truth procedure? And why then not supplement Badiou with Hegel, with a *Hegel* not of an objective ontology, but of the truth procedure, of the advent of a singular subject related to an event, *not of law but of truth*. But what prevents this from being just another Hegelian hallucination?

Hegel before the very first lines (“Being, pure being,—” [HSL 82]²⁷ of the *Logic* struggles with the question of how to begin and—to make a long story short—comes up with the following answer: The only thing that can make a beginning is a beginning; one can only begin, if one begins, and Hegel’s name for this is “*Entschluss*,” resolve or decision. This is why he claims the beginning is both *logically necessary and logically impossible*, that is, underivable, undeducible, unanalyzable: “All that is present [*vorhanden*] is simply the resolve, which can also be regarded as arbitrary, that we propose to consider thought as such” (HSL 70). What does the resolve decide? It is not deciding anything concretely: it is thus not only a fully immediate but also fully *indeterminate decision*. The decision only decides itself; that it has consequences for thought. So, if Badiou’s criticism of Hegel as an ontologist needs to be sustained, I think today—for anyone following Badiou’s diagnosis of the contemporary present—it is, as although it might seem impossible at first, absolutely necessary to supplement Badiou with a yet unknown Hegel. A Hegel of true beginnings, of truth procedure, such that finally, even as a Badiouian, one might adopt a version of Lenin’s saying about Marx: his theory is eternal because it is true. Hence, we can validly assert: *Hegel is (the immanence of) truth*.

NOTES

1. I thank Lorenzo Chiesa, Rebecca Comay, Jelica Sumic-Riha, Jan Völker, and Slavoj Žižek for their comments on previous drafts of this article.

2. Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis* (London/New York: Verso, 2010). The other choice Badiou assigns to Slavoj Žižek, who proposes an unknown Hegel in order to revivify communism.

3. It is an open question whether the unknown Hegel is the one proposed by Žižek or neither Badiou’s nor Žižek’s.

4. Alain Badiou, *Portable Pantheon: Figures of Postwar Philosophy*, trans. David Macey (London/New York: Verso, 2009), 4.

5. As was already suggested, of course, by Žižek in his *Revolution at the Gates: Žižek on Lenin. The 1917 Writings* (London/New York: Verso 2011).

6. True fidelity, as Badiou has demonstrated, always implies a moment of heresy, otherwise one simply ends up with proposing a new law, which makes fidelity impossible (BE 201–264).

7. In *Logics of Worlds* Badiou discusses the overall project of the *Logic*, as I will demonstrate subsequently, starting from its very preconditions and axioms.

8. Alain Badiou, *The Rational Kernel of Hegelian Dialectic*, trans. Tzuchien Tho (Melbourne: RE-Press, 2011). Hereafter parenthetically cited as RK.

9. *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1969), 83. Further cited as HSL.

10. To be precise: *There is no relation* between being and nothing in the beginning of the *Logic*, as Hegel puts it, there is only a “negation devoid of any relation” (HSL 83).

11. One might suspect that one reason Badiou insists on the fact that there are four conditions of philosophy can be inferred from a different understanding of how to comprehend the two Twos at the beginning of Hegel’s *Logic*.

12. This is why Badiou can state that “the mark [is] never equal to itself” (RK 52).

13. This is the movement, which Miller once called “stratification.” See Jacques-Alain Miller, *Matrix*, at: <http://www.lacan.com/symptom13/?p=127>.

14. The space of all possible places where a something can occur is what Badiou with a neologism calls “space.” See TS 9–10.

15. See Alain Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, trans. David Fernbach (London/New York: Verso, 2010), 105–117.

16. Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 97.

17. From a different perspective (periodization) and within a different setting (non-existence of the One), Badiou would also subscribe to this claim.

18. BE 161–172.

19. Yet, one might claim that this is not a flaw in Badiou’s thinking, but a very Hegelian handling of Hegel, as everything depends on the very beginning.

20. Their separation is what Badiou articulates as the two existential seals of set theory based on a meta-ontological proposal. The first axiomatically affirms the existence of the void (as the name of being), the second infinity. See BE 60–69, 156–157.

21. This point is crucial and implies an inversion of Hegel’s schema: there is “good infinity” (i.e., an infinity that is not simple, potentially endless repetition) and there is “bad infinity” (i.e., pure multiplicity), yet these two do not coincide; both have to be axiomatically affirmed separately and can never be identified.

22. It is objectively impossible since there is no objective law that might determine how to decide.

23. Badiou absolutely agrees with Hegel’s very definition of negation, which implies that the negation of a phenomenon is not its annihilation (which is what Badiou calls its “affirmative reality [LW 151]) and that, therefore, the negation of negation is not equal to affirmation. See Frank Ruda, *For Badiou: Idealism Without Idealism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

24. The following closing remarks are nothing but an abbreviated sketch of a changed perspective on what the Hegelian project seeks to achieve. This will be elaborated extensively in Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, *The Dash: Vicissitudes of Absolute Knowing* (in preparation).

25. Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, trans. J. Clemens and O. Feltham (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005), 55.

26. As might be known to the reader, Badiou declared that he is working on the third volume of *Being and Event*, whose title is “Immanence of Truths.” This book will be dealing with the question how to depict what happens to an individual that becomes a (part of a) subject after an eventual encounter of a truth procedure from within the individual. What I am suggesting here is that this very book might already exist; it is Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. See Alain Badiou, *Conférence de Ljubljana*, in *Filozofski vestnik*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, 2011, 7–24.

27. Translation slightly modified.

SIX

The Biolinguistic Challenge to an Intrinsic Ontology

Norman Madarasz

It is rare for Alain Badiou's ontology to be fully described as *intrinsic*. Such a characterization of his ontology receives but one full-blown statement in *Being and Event*, a third of the way into his main ontological treatise. In the complementary works published in the aftermath of this book, for example *Conditions*, the intrinsic per se is not what Badiou explores. Instead, he seeks to unpack within the philosophical tradition of metaphysics and ontology the idea of infinite multiplicity. This question, he holds, has "not yet been entirely dealt with today. [. . .] it is the perfect example of an *intrinsically ontological—mathematical—question*." (BE 145).

Ontology in *Being and Event* should not be thought in overly general terms, nor certainly in transcendent or transcendental ones. What Badiou strives to disentangle is the dilemma of demonstrating the possibility of the irreducibly new in a state of the world in which anything novel is succinctly transformed into a normalized entity, be it as object, commodity or body. For the new to be thought in its radical, irreducible dimension, it has to first ensure the continuity of its own terms as a novel subjective form, as a new series of practices occurring in the historical array of discourses Badiou calls *conditions*. A new subject arises in the wake of an event, in its site. To be new, though, this subject is maintained beneath radar level, as it were. It falls short of identification; indeed, it is hypothetically indiscernible. It only makes sense in Badiou's ontology for the new to be part of the languages of an acting state of the situation. This is why the indiscernible is "intrinsically" so, which means that it is funda-

mentally within the situation (BE 424). But in which way, if it is indiscernible? As a multiple, and just like any multiple being, it is “*intrinsically* multiple of multiples” (BE 45). This is the closest one gets in *Being and Event* to Badiou stating outright that his ontology is intrinsic, although his entire research project is aimed at demonstrating this.

Badiou’s preference has always been in favor of describing his ontology as *immanent* instead of intrinsic. Insofar as it gives predominance and a causal role to ruptures and breaks, the ontology is also *subtractive* in that its atom, that is multiplicity, is not given to presence. Its truth is thus reconstituted to the point of being created. Justified belief in the knowledge of its technical possibilities is always a gamble. Despite Badiou’s attachment to the technical sense of “subtractive,” the term is still a semantic prompter. It has no referent. By contrast, the intrinsic and the immanent speak for themselves. They can deal self-evidently with the greatest dilemma *Being and Event* confronts: proving there is thought beyond representation.

It was the late French philosopher Jean-Toussaint Desanti who, in an early analysis, unabashedly termed Badiou’s project an intrinsic ontology.¹ Published shortly after participating in the defense committee of Badiou’s *Habilitation*, as explained in *Briefings on Existence*, Desanti sets it as a pitfall.² Its resolution implies critical consequences for the boundaries and architecture of the ontology itself. Badiou as well as Bartlett and Ling most recently³ mitigate the critical consequences of this reading by stressing that, in addition, the ontology is *minimal*, insofar as it neither presents an exhaustive theory of being, nor one of mind. Nonetheless, as it is known, Badiou went on to show that there is a natural extension of the ontology in a “calculated,” objective and non-intentional phenomenology of worlds, truths and bodies. It is fair to say the solution brought to Desanti’s challenge gave way to a full-blown system, whose core remains nonetheless disconnected between an intrinsic ontology and an *extrinsic* phenomenology. For the time being, he has left the final problem of connection and continuity between the two “for another time, or for others to solve” (LW 39). Still, there are indications of approximation between the two in the so-called “physics of bodily truths” and higher-order categories that ground the concept of the transcendental in *Logics of Worlds*.

Keeping the expansion of the system on hold for now, the intrinsic also points to what might be missing from *Being and Event*, and from ontology itself. Whether or not spatial concepts and the domain of life and living have lain on the horizon of Badiou’s philosophical project from the start is open to speculation. What one cannot overstate is his claim to develop a theory of subject *without an object*—which also means a subject *without a body*. In other words, a theory of subject from within itself, as it were, from within its intrinsic possibility—which is not to say from within its *content*. Thus far, the logic at stake is sound. Yet the

question is how does this subject preexist life itself, that is, a formal concept of life? In *Logics of Worlds*, he argues that new subjective forms create new life forms. Sure enough. What the subject form cannot create is life itself, which is why the inclusion of the subject as an ontological concept at the expense of life, or indeed body, is enough to trigger skepticism regarding the principles and parameters of the science of being qua being.

In this essay, our objective is to test the intrinsic dimension of this ontology. It is also to explore its nativist characteristics, that is, as an innate ontology. The challenge we see is that the nativist claim is not one that is necessarily present at all times. Badiou's theory of subject is *not* a theory of mind. Subjectivity is expansive, although its fundamental, ontological structure recurs in each of the conditions as if as a set of regulative parameters. As it is internal to discursive practices, the terms of the model of "generic truth" imply that this ontology is also innate. As thought from the ontological angle, the theory of subject derives from a provocation of radical change brought about by an immanent form of causality in the normalized sphere of existence. Therefore, this subject should not be mistaken for the communicational and personalized subjectivity of interest to philosophical tendencies that have attempted, at least since Descartes, to draft a universal model of mind specific to human beings. Moreover, Badiou's theory of subject tracks a form of subjectivity that is inherently different from ordinary existence. Their conceptual frameworks are transformational and potentially include those committed to rationally produced truths who live to verify them.

Throughout his ontology, Badiou strives to emphasize the terms of immanence and singularity that characterize this concept of subjectivity. Initially, at least, the concept appears to occupy a minority position, resulting from minimal decisions, to take part in an incipient process whose promise is for betterment. Still, there are no outside guarantees that the new subject shall reach completion. Its terms are negotiated and performed immanently to a process of growth and expansion, which inevitably encounters the inertial and counter-transformational pressures of specific semantic and pragmatic contexts. Every subjective process is thus singular, which accounts for subjectivity being rooted in very specific discursive practices. Truth is the means by which *this* theory of subjectivity is assessed. This specific, albeit radical, concept of subjectivity is of interest here insofar as it responds to and frames an event through a commitment to realizing its ethical potential for the better. To this extent, the subject is structurally universal, although its recurrent emergence is nothing but contingent.

In sum, to achieve this conceptualization of the new from the basis of a radical break with the state of a given situation, Badiou requires a differentiated concept of subject. In the annals of philosophy, it is Hegel who first presents this possibility conceptually, and he does so in his

Science of Logic. A combination of the *Logic* and the formalist projects of modern French rationalism and mid-twentieth-century epistemological thought has confirmed that an ontology that strives to maintain its general structural features has to suspend general subjectivity as a given within its claims.⁴ Emergent subjectivity is considerably different. It stands as a further reason for suspending content-based claims on the nature of the thinking processes characterizing this subjectivity. If anything, a general category of thought would be more appropriate than anything stipulating a form of "consciousness."

Still, we maintain it is plausible to submit the brain-body to the formalist project Badiou applies to the metaphysical concept of Being. What is the general definition of Being qua Being? According to Badiou, it is "the thinking of presentation as such," to be understood as the structure of what is presented in the infinity of real situations.⁵ The brain is certainly a finite organ. Even as the number of synaptic connections is countable up to a 1,000 trillion, it still remains finite. However, what the brain can produce is an infinite number of externalizations. Being is its own definition, which also breaks off as unthinkable what lies at the edge, but never outside, of a "situation." In other words, ontology is situated, as any brain activity is. The type of infinity at hand here is not so much what is given as what is produced. The question is what is the theory through which the separate levels of activity can most clearly be seen, that is, between the "ontological" structural level, the systematic level of the production (or generation) of truths, and the linguistic level of articulating these truths in sentence and argumentative form?

The relationship between Being and Brain-Body is not happenstance. Badiou never considers the thought of Being as something that can be located from outside of specific, local situations. It can no more be captured in suspended motion that the generative dimension of Noam Chomsky's theory of universal grammar. According to Chomsky, the language faculty can, at best, be transcribed in a general syntax for spoken language, although it is always determined by the parameters of specific grammars and phonetic properties of real languages. As opposed to Badiou's concept of being, the operations allowing for the creation of syntax have always been considered by Chomsky to be a natural phenomenon. As such, Chomsky posits that the functional operations allowing for syntax formations obey the principal of minimal natural computation. Even more significantly, Chomsky attributes the central function of the language faculty to "merge," that is, a set-theoretic function. Set theory not only represents merge, it is the operation of merge itself. From this angle, if ontology is in fact the theory of multiple sets, then nature and being overlap in equivalence. If this is really the case, then perhaps it is a point at which the concept of "ontology" ought to be at least radically redesigned, if not simply abandoned.

In the post-Hegelian tradition, the claims for an ontology have tended to be more stable when the discursive form of the question of Being was addressed either dialectically or poetically. Badiou's ontological project puts the coherence of the post-Hegelian research field into disarray. How does one make sense of the genesis and existential status of mathematical entities? Heidegger would tend to bar mathematics from ontology *tout court*. To this extent, he did not fundamentally differ from Wittgenstein. For Badiou, though, the linguistic turn is what obfuscates the real dynamic of ontology. He recounts how "without noticing it, I had been caught in the grip of a logicist thesis" (BE 5). Embracing a Platonist realism, intrinsically instead of transcendently, was the first step toward a thesis that ended up reducing nature to being and holding a mathematics as its ontology. But precisely, on what ground does the reduction of nature to being stand? And even were mathematics to maintain priority over physics to grasp the consequences of this reduction, why is being anything different than an already transformed idea of nature?

All said, there is no fundamental position of life in the novel, radically subjective form. Such is the predicate we explore in this essay. To explore the relationship between a mathematical, intrinsic ontology and nature as non-eternal life, we first turn back to Hegel. We proceed by briefly examining what restricted Hegel from extending mathematics as a syntax to the notion of *subject* in his own sense, that is, mind in an extra-individual sense, despite his recognition of the need for a formalism to accomplish this. Deep within the doctrine of concept in the *Science of Logic*, life is steeped in the immediacy, the first stage, of the conclusive structure of the dialectical logic of the absolute Idea itself. Hegel contends to have reached this stage by excluding mathematics from the domain of the concept. Part of Badiou's realism involves separating mathematics from the transcendental formalization of appearing in general in addition to the empirical sciences. As such, the mathematization of ontology shows how new processes of subjective shifts in the sciences can be mapped independently from language as well as logic. Chomsky's linguistic science is clearly a case in point of the latter claim in the theory of Universal Grammar, although Badiou makes no mention of it. We should like to argue that the intrinsic claims in Chomsky's concept of I-language ultimately force the sense of immanence in Badiou to be tied to a broadened sense of the living, thus confirming Chomsky's call for linguistics to be considered a paradigm for the sciences today, and, we might add, for ontology as well.

REGAINED CONTINUITY: PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND THE MATHEMATICAL ONTOLOGY

There are many good reasons to consider philosophy as part of the sciences, and not the other way around. One primary reason is the exponential growth of experimental scientific research, whose global implications simply cannot be prejudged by philosophy. It may well be true that there is not one global and systematic theory on mind/body, which is why there are sufficient reasons to force philosophy to at least reconsider some of its classical convictions on its main theories of subjectivity, freedom, finality and finitude. Many of these theories are crafted by excess specialization that stems from research in moral psychology and is mapped onto a general theory of consciousness, or at least of conscious processes. While some theories have tended to redefine the terms of the debate,⁶ the lack of a *transformational theory of mind/brain* in them simply limits their scope to the perpetuation of the subjective mental form that exists here and now—notwithstanding the pedagogical stances involved in eliminative materialism. By contrast, the French epistemological and structuralist traditions have often counter-intuitively reinforced transformational theories in rationalism and mathematics.

The philosophical trigger for organizing a mathematical ontology can be said to follow a line of thinkers stemming from Jean Cavaillès⁷ through Georges Canguilhem and the Anglo-Austrian and German currents. In France, this tradition has analyzed the epistemic and historical consequences of the mathematization of physics as creating a novel subjective configuration called “the subject of science.” It reveals fissures in positivist models due to a broader understanding of natural selection, historical rationality and the unconscious. More recently, it has undergone refining with the onset of genetic research, economics and linguistics, although this is already found in French epistemological research in the 1970s, with set theory accompanying these forays into deeper structures. Apart from providing the basis for the modernization of the propositional logic as well as argumentation theory, set theory provided the grounds not merely for the reduction of mathematics to logic, but also and more significantly for the *separation* of mathematics from logic.

This is why it is important to ask the question: What is mathematics in Badiou’s eyes? Why does it qualify as the fundamental ontology? In BE 446–47, one can find a very clear response. The meaning of ontology is set in Aristotelian terms, whereby it is the science of Being qua Being, albeit an imperfect, perhaps only possible science, as the limits of Being are unreachable. Being cannot be assumed to be an entity. This is why in Aristotle, the closest we get to Being is through an approach, an approximation, or indeed a vector: *pros-En*.

This position has two direct implications. First, Being lends itself primarily to being said, which is an idea Heidegger developed at length and

which led him to consider the poetic word as motivating fundamental ontology. Yet Heidegger can be said to have reduced being to finitude in its existential manifestation, and simultaneously withdrawn into a formless dimension that evokes the neo-Platonic figure of the One. The second implication for the way Aristotle recasts Being is a logical problem. So as not to presuppose the terms it ultimately grounds, the practice of ontological philosophy cannot be a function of a particular language, or grammar. Moreover, as any linguistic construct becomes discourse (in our world at least), this practice would have to *forget* that it is its own metaphysics. A broader candidate for ontology would thus have to be a systematic construction, and not a language. It would have not only to deal with infinity but with the multiplication of the latter. The only possible candidate is mathematics, which is

the metaphysics of the ontology that it is. It is, in its essence, *forgetting of itself*. [. . .] In this sense, mathematical ontology is not technical, because the unveiling of the origin is not an unfathomable virtuality, it is rather an intrinsically available option, a permanent possibility. Mathematics regulates in and by itself the possibility of deconstructing the apparent order of the object and the liaison, and of retrieving the original "disorder" in which it pronounces the Ideas of the pure multiple and their suture to being-qua-being by the proper name of the void. It is both the forgetting of itself and the critique of that forgetting. It is the *turn* towards the object, but also the *return* towards the presentation of presentation. (BE 446–47)

Set theory thus provides Badiou with two valuable conceptual entities that were left obscured by logicist claims in their vast applications. First, the notion of set itself: the elementary principle of belonging in the multiple ensures a rooted, intrinsic configuration of the universe. As Badiou shows in appendix 2 of *Being and Event*, "belonging" does not presuppose the category of relation. Indeed, relation, provided it be a function, is nothing but a pure multiple. Therefore, the category of belonging is merely the name of the deep immanence allowing for the phenomenon of inner growth that is essential for the argument stipulating the excess of mathematics over logical models.⁸ It is on this basis that Badiou can argue beyond isomorphism between logical systems and the set-theoretic universe, that mathematics is an inscription of the universe as such, its minimal principal being that of the generation of sets. Second, set theory postulates the category of the irreducible multiple as the basic "unit" of its processes. The vaster compounds of these units are nonetheless part of a system with expansive and retroactive or recursive possibilities, a fundamental point for the restricted theory of subject he attempts to show. What we thus have is a sub-symbolic argument. Set theory builds from the fundamental idea that every multiple is *intrinsically* a multiple of the multiple (BE 45).

As such, set theory is not a logical interpretation of mathematics, but a literal transcription of its inner order. Its vectors of activation are the forward-moving, linear compounding of sets as well as the recursive internal diversification arising from the peculiar nature of its core object, the “element.” For Badiou, it is imperative to consider the element as a transitive string of multiples, that is, multiples of multiples.⁹ Yet the question remains as to whether mathematics as such is the science of Being, considered according to the concept of irreducibility, or whether it stands as a general science of entities, basically an adjunct to physics. If the former is confirmed, mathematics would still have to take on an extra-physicalist idea of Nature. In sum, whether one understands Badiou’s position as ontological or metaphysical, what is really at stake is not so much philosophical as it is the struggle between mathematics and physics for access to the most fundamental reality.

Badiou places safeguards to both internal and external pressures to philosophy in its relationship to science, which he calls a “suture” (MP). Put in a nutshell, given that philosophy’s central relationship is between truth and subjectivity, philosophy’s articulation of this relationship always circulates in regional applications. The formalism of the mathematical ontology manages to trace the relation of truth and subjectivity to the transfinite. In this regard, limiting Hegel’s reading of the mathematical infinite becomes a priority for Badiou, since it is really with Hegel that ontology is split from mathematics and grounded conceptually, that is, philosophically.

In *Being and Event*, Hegel is submitted to considerable scrutiny over the conclusion he draws regarding what is otherwise an incisive discussion of the mathematics of his time. Taken literally, Hegel’s critique is that mathematics falls short of philosophy in its potential to assess the import of the infinite, ever since algebra formalized it in the infinitesimal calculus as the notion of limit. Philosophy exceeds any limit in and through the power of the concept. We will return to a detailed discussion of this shortly. Let it suffice to say that what Hegel emphasizes in the concept of concept is that philosophical methodology is fundamentally a science of logic. By that very fact, it is able to deal with the absolute and the infinite in broader terms than mathematics. This claim may have stood in the early 1800s, but as Badiou shows, the discoveries in mathematics led by Cantor in his analyses of infinite series proves the *opposite*. Despite early entries into French philosophy, Cantor’s results were not fully integrated. With Frege’s *Grundlagen*, they contributed to the crafting of a propositional logic adequate to the needs of the new philosophy of language, namely the logicist ontology marshalling the semantic inquiries of analytic philosophy. The new ontology of logic had a reverse effect on mathematics, as can be seen in Wittgenstein’s post-*Tractatus*-era work, in which the logicist program ends up limiting the consequences of the set-theoretic idea of the infinite.

Set theory never was adequate to deal with *ordinary language* philosophy. This claim forces two considerations to be taken into account. As a semantic theory of language, set theory is merely partial. The principle of the excluded middle has no universal application when dealing with the production of sense, or the performance of truth in social and historical contexts; nor does it, perhaps, in the plurality of subjective experience. The second consequence is even stronger: the concept of universe in set theory points to one in which multiplicity is irreducible to the unit form. Nonetheless, the set-theoretic universe proves to be necessarily appropriate to the axioms of classical logic. As for the axiom of choice and the indeterminacy of the continuum hypothesis, that is, the two singular conjectures that allow for radical change to occur in and through the ontology, they are independent of bivalence.

Thus, set theory establishes rigorous parameters for ontology in its categorical construction as well as in its ontological claims. The latter are to be understood as follows: an ontological claim is equivalent to an interpretative model developed to make sense of the objective referential structure of a logic or science of being, even when this structure is postulated as over and above the subject-object paradigm. The scientific nature of ontology is often put into question due precisely to the fact that its entities are rarely objects per se. Not being an object, by the very fact of the independence of the subject-object paradigm, in no way implies that it is a subject according to modern philosophy, that is, as a substance. The upshot of this critique is that being is something else: a structure or system.

On this basis, the distinction made by Badiou between mathematics and science is far-reaching regarding the conjecture that ontology is mathematics. If the mathematical ontology is intrinsic and dependent on historical reality, then it can only be thought of as intrinsic to specific *discourses* and *practices*: science, in addition to art, emancipatory politics and love. These are the contexts in which the explanatory genesis of subjective formations can be located, contextualized and analyzed specifically in relation to the new truths produced therein.

Badiou's ontology is thus structured according to a systemic grid. As such, it is true to its theoretical background in 1960s French structuralism. Yet he eventually took leave of this fundamental paradigm, present in Foucault, Deleuze, Lacan and Canguilhem in the expansion of the post-humanist concept of "subject of science" and "subject of the unconscious" in order to cast a new theory of an event-triggered subject distributed over four discursive practices.

This distribution of terms brings to mind the evolution of another 1960s structuralism, which also makes a claim for grounding in set theory. Chomsky's principles and parameters model as applied to the category of I-Language is explicitly steeped in a mathematical ontology, though Chomsky holds back on naming it as such. There may be an abyss be-

tween the intrinsic ontology and Universal Grammar, but their juxtaposition is of importance here due to the apparent disconnection being argued between ontology and nature. The issue is taken up explicitly by Badiou (BE Meditations 11–12). Chomsky works through it in his reflections on the concept of nature resulting from the discoveries of his generative linguistics.¹⁰

Alain Badiou's set-theoretic ontological model of subjectivity is neither generalizable, nor separable from the discursive practices in which real subjects grow by producing new truths. As we argued, Badiou's model provides a syntax for the emergence of the radically new, under optimal conditions. Nonetheless, it is important to be prudent with the idea of formal syntax. Badiou's reasoning on this point is that ontology may well be a formalist syntax, but it is not a system of rules. Ontology does not have an epistemology akin to linguistics. Even more, it is non-referential. It is not built according to the set-forming potential of pure multiplicity.

In this case, it ought to be understood not only as the essence of number, but also of concept in the sense specifically demonstrated by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*. With Hegel there is still a margin for negotiation, unlike what occurs with Wittgenstein. Badiou rejects outright Wittgenstein's identification of geometry as syntax, that is, "a system of logical rules which lay down the grammar for describing phenomena."¹¹ Remarkably, this is also Chomsky's position regarding Universal Grammar, called the "genetically determined character of language,"¹² which is also no mere system of following rules. Indeed, UG is all about creating them as well.

The claim of immanence is a necessary condition for a syntactic model, which subsequently allows, like any other thing human, interpretations. By contrast, a syntactic model can only allow for an interpretation function as a specific functional interface. The upshot of this condition is that the interface is accessed by the system, and not by the agent. There is then no relationship between "interpretation" in this technical sense and what is understood in hermeneutics when addressed to a discourse whose architecture is primarily symbolic. It is a functionalist claim that projects the mind as a differential field in which a transformational space is enabled by the location of a generic and expansive point. The ontology-specific term "generic" ought to be literally understood here as what has no properties.

Were the subsequent claim made regarding the relationship of the generic set to the human mind, at least two rejoinders have to follow. First, the theory of subject is bound by the ontological (or natural) process in which the radically new is produced. One of the broader suggestions involved in linking the event to the radically new according to irreducible contingency (or what Meillassoux calls "absolute"¹³) is that there are no guarantees to grasping its fundamental essence. It is a claim con-

sistent with the nature-specific syntax in which no final clause can be verified to a new subjective form. Just as there is no final meaning or sense to the occurrence of a discourse-specific event beyond the subjective form triggered in its wake, so also is there no sense claimed to the production of the new as a natural process.

This is why determining the "truth" of the event is that of a type of truth which "makes no sense" and is thus identical to truth alone. If there is an extension of the effects of the event on the human mind, it must be to the part or structure of the mind (whatever may be the theory of mind) intrinsically linked to natural processes. Using Badiou's terminology here, any human animal may enter a new subjective space, a new thought space, as any human animal has the capacity to think in terms of truth and receive greater truth without formalization. But then comes the work and discipline to maintain the new as new, as the consequences of the event-site and the event-subject confront the inertia and resistance of the state of the situation.

Second, subjective practice (or what Badiou calls "thought") is human-specific. In this sense, the generic set could be said to "piggy back," as Chomsky would put it, on the generative architecture of the language faculty, as the arithmetic and particular languages do. In Chomsky,¹⁴ the technical sense of "syntax" undergoes a fundamental change, insofar as the so-called deep structure of the language faculty and the computational system that generates the production of syntactic form is rid of the earlier X-bar theory. This initial configuration, going back to Chomsky's earliest work of writing grammars for particular languages is integrated into the core principles of set theory. Here we anticipate a fuller presentation of the "merge" category (though let it suffice to say for the time being that merge is stipulated upon the fundamental principle of "recursive belonging").

The claim we seek to make about the immanent and the innate is thus the following: the ontology is consistent with I-Language if and only if this sense of set-theoretic syntax is understood. Neither the intrinsic ontology, nor I-Language is rule based. The specific axiomatic version of set theory is not primary here. This means that whether processes such as choice, discreteness and interruption are conclusively defined in accordance with the axioms of a specific model is not essential. Easton's theorem and Cohen's results give an indication of how other processes might be described without there being existential claims attached to them. However, there is no debate as to whether the natural number successor function is part of the general syntax, or indeed whether it is related to merge. In Badiou's ontology the successor function is taken at face value to deal with internal generational processes of creating statements at the "site of the event."¹⁵

These specifications regard the intrinsic ontology and whether there are grounds to consider it as a scientific theory triggered by the radically

new subjective form in the scientific condition denominated by the generic enterprise. As we saw, the system allows for circulation between particular discursive practices and the general syntax, either in terms of categories, functions or indeed models. That Badiou's ontological claim is intrinsic to the practices merely emphasizes the difference in levels of process. Localizing this difference does not require the postulation of a transcendental limit. Indeed, identifying this limit intrinsically to a discursive practice results from the mapping of the generic process to concrete instances of exteriorization of radically new subjective forms. It is the *intrinsic* mechanism of the generic system that maps the process, instead of any external or cultural-based interpretation. But when a set of discursive practices leads to theorizing how this comes about, its "referent," as it were, is stipulated to be outside of the historical and culturally specific context. In that sense, such a theory contributes to understanding the syntactic field. This is exactly what occurs in Badiou's reading of the axiomatized set theory, which provides logical and epistemic justification for lifting set theory, as it were, from its historical context to become the ontology itself.

Nonetheless, despite a common ancestry, Chomsky's Universal Grammar and the generative enterprise represents a challenge to mathematical ontology. Chomsky upholds that UG is so powerful a system that not only does it generate the formal architecture of what becomes a particular language, given the phonological, logical and lexical mapping and interfaces at work in parametric contexts, *but it also generates arithmetic*. By contrast, Badiou claims that from the perspective of the "state of the situation" (i.e., from a given normalization of the metastructure of the situation), there is access to what generates numbers, that is, multiplicity. Numbers then are split between the "count for one," by means of identifying units, and singularity as any given number is the *name of a set, the name of multiplicity*.

There seems to be no way to redesign the Cartesian subject-object relationship, due to the identity logic that is marshalled by a process of naming and predication the structural components of which are functions of representational thought, intentional perception and unitary objectification. Yet, there are ways to skirt the Cartesian subject and the substance metaphysics that accompanies it. One of these ways is to consider identification not as a psycho-cognitive process, but as a biological one, specific both to UG and to general theory of multiplicity.

We go on to submit this claim to greater scrutiny in section III. First, however, it is important that from the philosophical angle the extension into biology be rid of lingering Hegelian motifs for the specific reason we show in the next section.

THE BREAKING POINT: HEGEL'S SUBMISSION OF MATHEMATICS TO THE CONCEPT

The question of the intrinsic, the immanent and the innate in either Badiou or Chomsky results from our preliminary work on the concept of world, that is, the concept of the fundamental notions of empiricism, which are object and body. In ontology, the empirical goes through a methodological suspension. However, this methodology is not claimed to be a phenomenological *epochè* due to the indeterminacy of what would be the limits of the natural attitude. For Badiou, a reformed and scientifically sound ontology can no more presuppose what object and body are than it can the subject. For Chomsky, science has not managed to convincingly account for body ever since Newton refuted the basis of the mechanical "contact" physics. The upshot of these positions is that for Badiou the ontology of the subject shows a constitutive dimension that is shaped through historical variation (BE 177). For Chomsky, language is both a formal computational system as well as a physical process of exteriorization.

It is in Hegel, more than in Kant, that we find a common basis on which to deepen our juxtaposition of the two thinkers. Ian Hacking does well to recall that "Hegel's *Phenomenology* reminds us that the idea of language as public had been around for some time, and so must precede whatever claim could be made for Bopp or Humboldt," here speaking in direct reference to Chomsky.¹⁶ Hegel is the one who led the idea of intrinsic structure to shed its dualistic extensions, as it is merged conceptually with the concept of immanence. As far as mathematics is concerned, immanence is a vital property to maintain, for as Hegel famously threatens in Remark I of I.II.Section II (Quantum): "As long as mathematics does not know the nature of its instrument by failing to master the metaphysics and critique of the infinite, it cannot determine the scope of its application and cannot secure itself against the misuse of it."¹⁷ This is why Hegel's treatment of mathematical infinity continues to be a watershed for the ontological decisions to come in the later nineteenth century.

Hegel's position in Badiou's system works as a focus as well as a limit. Just like Badiou, so also does Hegel understand the "true" (or "actual") infinite as "[standing] much higher than the usual so-called *metaphysical infinite* from which the objections against the other infinite, the mathematical, are made."¹⁸ The connection to Hegel is largely a matter of the conviction that a renewal of the spirit of system is required so as to bind immanence to subjectivity in a science of Being that is not intrinsically subjectivist, as it was in Kant. However, Badiou sees Hegel as undermining the power of his philosophical system by considering mathematics as limited to dealing with the true infinite only partly, that is, only in its

"interiority." Hegel does this by setting up his concept of concept so as to articulate the exteriorization of the infinite.

The exception Badiou takes with respect to Hegel is logically delicate. In the French philosophical landscape, the idea of a philosophical system was discredited after decades of fierce critique from the likes of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as well the Parisian structuralists, like Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida. All of them worked through the anti-systematic framework of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche. From that perspective, Hegel's philosophical endeavor stands as the last major attempt at creating a system.

Furthermore, two generations of thinkers were led to abandon the system as an adequate medium in and through which to include what has become one of the most pressing questions in philosophy, that is, the inclusion of otherness. Badiou transforms this question in a shift that is faithful to his political militancy. By means of a post-Cartesian recasting of the subject, so as to strip it of its a priori fundamentals in either a transcendental logic or substance dualism, Badiou reads subjectivity as what enables the surging forth of a construct whose initial predicate, apart from being concretely real, is to be radically new. Such a move requires subjectivity to be understood through the deconstruction of (onto-theo-logical conceptions of) Being. It also requires subjectivity to be recast against the multiplication of infinities so as to prevent the identification of substance with subjectivity. In that measure, it is *only* through a mathematical grounding that Badiou manages to relate the full extension of the event concept, as well as the differentiating forms of the discursive practices, or conditions, in which the subject arises.

The idea of system presents scientific dilemmas. If it expects to stand as a philosophical discovery, then it has to overcome the central feature of its author's signature. This is precisely what put limited durability on Hegel's system. Whether it be his German romantic style, or the incipient state of the sciences of his time which he so commented, or indeed the immediate attack of his work coming from the most conservative sectors of the Prussian academy, spearheaded by Schelling, it is clear that the system shows defects. Structurally, though, the ultimate setback for any system is its author's voice.

This is why Badiou literally grounds the axiom of choice, as an intrinsic, indeed *innate*, position, from within the ontology wherefrom subjectivity may emerge. Choice is immanent to the ontology, but innate to the event-site from which the subjective form of the new emerges. Badiou supplements the axiom of choice with a non-subjective ontological decision, just in case he is required to answer for the spin he gives to the axiom. There is nothing either cognitive, let alone psychological, to this "choice." Choice here makes sense only as a parametrical constraint that buffers an inner momentum to expand set-theoretically.

The main statement on Hegel occurs in Meditation 15 of *Being and Event*, a chapter that marks an important negotiation between “nature” and “being.” There are different ways to read the relationship between philosophy, mathematics and the increasingly mathematized science of physics. To be sure, any claims for a break between these strands would do injustice to the way philosophy in the English, or indeed the German, language has developed. This is only partially the case for what occurred in the French tradition in the period between the late 1940s and 1968. As such, the interpretation of Hegel’s stance on mathematics represents a certain culmination of what would become the Continental tradition, prior to splitting into opposition between hermeneutics and deconstruction. What Badiou suggests in his analysis is that if the single infinite is a shield for multiplicity, then Hegel did more than any thinker to reinforce the marginalization of an autonomous multiplicity from philosophical enquiry. This is the crux of Badiou’s reading of Hegel’s conception of immanence when he writes: “It would not be an exaggeration to say that all of Hegel can be found in the following: the ‘still-more’ is immanent to the ‘already’; everything that is, is already ‘stillmore’” (BE 162).

The rest of Meditation 15 is crafted around a critique of the concept of determinateness (*Bestimmtheit*). This is the concept necessary to provide grounding to a thing’s being that agrees with the dialectical movement that also constantly confronts a thing with what it is not. As such, it allows further change to be the outcome of the real (or “effective”) parameters and constraints faced by bodies in space-time. That any body or thing be inclined to change is not the issue here. Nor is it the question of whether the philosophical methodology for explaining formal causality requires another order of conceptuality, as if the main concern were to avoid circularity. The issue that does arise is the one over how to adequately account for immanence.

Given the presuppositions Badiou locates in Hegel’s own reasoning, immanence falls short of identifying the internal characteristic of movement itself, which would be its essential subtraction from anything external. For this reason, Badiou considers Hegel’s ontology to be merely a “generative ontology” since the way it conceives of infinity is as a motor that produces the same: “everything is intrinsic, since being-other is the one-of-being, and everything possesses an identificatory mark in the shape of the interiority of non-being” (BE 163). Escaping from determinateness would then require infinity to be akin to a *decision*. This has to be so, according to Badiou, because if everything is intrinsic, then something fundamental is eliminated, which is the utterly unknowable. If the upshot of being intrinsic is that it can be known, then the infinite Hegel deals with is basically that of the finite. For Badiou, the problem is not whether a generative Hegelian ontology can account for other beings, nor the essence of otherness, but whether it can account for the Other *as a place*.

Hegel's emphasis on determination ought to be literally understood as a submission to the law. It is the law that determines that a thing has to be when it is contextualized by movement of the dialectic, which is Hegel's phrase for continuity. What being continuous in Hegel implies is that once something comes to be, it has to be in the shape of the one, the unit, or the whole. What exceeds this is merely void. This is what is otherwise known as Hegel's contention that there is a bad infinite, as opposed to a "better" one. The good infinite, in Hegel's sense, eludes representation; it is the quantum that exceeds quantity. This is also why it eludes mathematics. As Hegel writes at the conclusion of his dialectical development of a quantum that is "all":

In ratio quantum is external to itself, different from itself; this, its externality, is the reference connecting a quantum to another quantum, each quantum acquiring value only in this connection with its other; and this reference constitutes the determinateness of the quantum which is this unity. In this unity quantum possesses not an indifferent but a qualitative determination; in this its externality has turned back into itself; it is in it what it is.¹⁹

The upshot of this is that the good infinite becomes what is virtual, at least virtual to our conscious mind, that is, of our capacity to *name it*. The question Badiou sees Hegel as trying to capture is thus precisely the difference of that different space as something other than a limit.²⁰

Indeed, for most of the nineteenth century, the intelligibility of the infinite as something other than the generative process itself was the idea of limit. In modern AI parlance, one would say it is the point whence generation would appear to halt. To follow in Badiou's reading, though, Hegel is convinced that the halt follows an inherently dialectical process, where it itself is the result of iteration. Unlike its content, which is essentially numerical, the halt is a purely qualitative position, which justifies that there be a negative and a positive version of infinities. The bad infinite is thus essentially finitude, crunching through an endless process of numerical generation. By contrast, the good infinite is the void, which proliferates without the repetition specific to being a unit: subjective virtuality, immanence, the unrepresentable—ultimately corresponding to von Neumann's formalist nomenclature for element of a set.

The conclusion Hegel draws about the good infinite as being accessed solely by dialectical reasoning, instead of mathematics, is finally that to which Badiou himself brings a halt. Accordingly, "on the basis of the very same premises as Hegel, one must recognize that the repetition of the One in number cannot arise from the interiority of the negative" (BE 169). He thereby problematizes an entire historical period, which set its sights on a symmetry between presence and non-being, which would account for the emergence of the new. The conclusion that ought to be drawn instead is that what characterizes the proliferation of multiplicity is nei-

ther the consistency of dialectical logic over and beyond mathematics, let alone the quantitative permanence of numeration; rather it is the inconsistency itself that lies at the heart of the new.

From the perspective of Hegelian scholarship, there is less consensus over how to assess the consequences of Hegel's understanding of the infinitesimal calculus. As Kant had already written, "the successive *synthesis* of unity in the traversal of a quantum can *never be completed*."²¹ This is precisely where Hegel introduces a critical reading of the disappearance of quantity in the ratio between derivatives, say dx/dy . As the concept of ratio reaches the infinitesimal calculus, this indetermination is thought to leave the domain of quantity altogether, to become "mere moments."²²

Hegel may very well be the first thinker to split apart the alternative between object and part of object, or fraction of object. As he puts it, an intermediate state between being and nothingness ought to be warranted. The first of this occurs with the introduction of the notion of *quantum*. As DiGiovanni puts it in his succinct presentation (and recent translation) of the *Science of Logic*, the quantum is an entity "that when duly developed [. . .] transcends the limits of 'quantity.' Calculus, according to Hegel, was a clear instantiation of this overreaching of 'quantity.'"²³ Yet Hegel argues that something more is lacking, that is, understanding of the *concept* itself.

Nonetheless, Badiou forces us to take issue with what DiGiovanni along with other Hegel scholars naturally do, which is to emphasize that the science of dialectics manages to articulate the true (or the "actual") infinite, whereas the mathematics of Hegel's day would merely consider a higher order entity such as "totality" as a quantity. Dialectical logic is what would reach and articulate the true infinite understood as quantum, whereas the bivalent logic fundamental to mathematics is trapped within a reading that reduces it to the infinite series of natural numbers and the reign of the principle of non-contradiction. There is no consensus in the scholarship on whether A. Cauchy submitted the infinite necessarily to a quantum in excess over quantity.

For all of Hegel's insight in his reading, mathematics have gone a step further. The ravages brought to the centuries-long relationship between philosophy and mathematics by Hegel's accurate, albeit temporary results, no longer justify reading him literally, at least on this point. It is not so much that Hegel was wrong, but, as French mathematician Alain Conne regularly emphasizes, mathematics is the practice that now creates its own concepts.²⁴ Badiou himself takes this result as reinforcing the need to tackle ontology from the perspective of the multiplicity, which eventually substitutes quantum, although by means of a break with dialectics. What remains as a question is whether the break with the concept of life is also warranted.

MODERN FORAYS INTO REVOLUTIONARY EMPIRICAL SCIENCE AND ONTOLOGICAL MAPPING

Hegel's *Geist* takes aim at two prevailing notions of subject passed down through the Cartesian sciences in either their rationalist or empiricist branches. *Geist* is not grounded in a notion of substance, but in one of concept. Nor is *Geist* grounded a priori as separate from body, or incorporation, regardless of how this might be understood. Indeed, as it is little understood, there are no grounds for any separation such as dualism defends.

On the other hand, *Geist* is as universally distributed as is the *res cogitans*. Were the benchmark science either physics or chemistry, as in the Bachelardian tradition, it would make little sense in hindsight to mathematize history in similar ways to the process by which the former sciences were formalized. If history is considered a process of truth production, it requires another scientific benchmark, one that is revolutionary with respect to ideology and politics, which is the path taken by Althusser and the *Cercle d'Ulm*, his broader research team. What was overlooked though, which is what Badiou integrates into this system at the specific point where ontology is bound to history, is a scientific practice that revolutionized *science itself*. Throughout the twentieth century, a number of candidates could vow for such laurels. In this section, we shall argue that the most complex case of a revolutionary science is one that Badiou's system ignores. Chomsky's Universal Grammar, however, is so revolutionary that it exceeds the scientific condition and offers perhaps an alternate model for the mathematical ontology.

In the ontological preparation for his linguistics, Chomsky takes on two massive philosophical doctrines, the Materialist and the Externalist Orthodoxies. In his first critique, materialism (in which he includes much of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science and philosophy, including twentieth-century naturalism) is refuted on the grounds that it was Newton himself who destroyed mechanistic physics by introducing gravity as a third entity, beyond matter and form, into the universe: "Mature Newtonian physics—the final version of the *Principia*—invokes not dualism but a kind of trialism, with passive matter, active forces and a 'subtle ether' relating them."²⁵ From this perspective, Chomsky considers that the Cartesian model of the body-as-machine and of movement as contact collapses. As a result, we no longer know what the body is, or how it is constituted. It could very well be the case that molecular biology and genetics is beginning to know it (certainly physics is not, according to Chomsky, since it deals with simplified phenomena, hardly indicative of human, biological reality). The upshot is that language is as much a physical phenomenon as anything else the body produces and uses. Even more, it has an innate dimension to the mind/brain. Were Chomsky right, the Quinean project of naturalizing philosophy would make no sense:

Philosophy does not demonstrate an understanding about its concepts and categories [that they] are already part of physical reality. Philosophy is nothing but naturalized, in its essence, although it seems ignorant of that. Now, Descartes, Locke, and Hume all refer to some special and singular power bestowed, either by God or by Nature, into the human mind/brain that is responsible for language use, and specifically the ability of reaching infinite ends by finite means (Humbolt).²⁶

As for the Externalist Orthodoxy, Chomsky raises several key objections to the analytic philosophy of language. He rejects Frege's approach based on the idea that natural language does not recognize the category "well-formed expressions," and Putnam's natural kinds arguments. Moreover, Chomsky rejects Frege's third world argument, according to which a common language expresses thoughts (which Chomsky accepts within other limits). He also believes that the findings of structuralism (texts) and behaviorism are nothing but data, and what we find in the analysis of mental states and production is information. What he is convinced of, however, is that something like a "parser" system selects "interpretations" of symbolic data within the language faculty. At this level, there is no reference-based semantics. Nonetheless, the fact that it is an operational level that shows semantical features leads Chomsky to suggest that semantics is nothing but syntax. Therefore, language is an internalist, natural phenomenon.

Based on these arguments in the philosophy of science, one of the most interesting aspects of Chomsky's minimalist program becomes its ontological importance. It is as if Chomsky's scientific theory of language requires a new ontology, that is, a new "subjective form," from which he has taken to rewriting the history and philosophy of science. The most salient claim is that Universal Grammar is not a language, but a system consisting of a generative process mapped onto two interfaces, which are conceptual-intentional and semantic-linguistic. The research that went into representing Universal Grammar is the "X-Bar theory," part of the so-called Standard Model. X-Bar theory is an extensive demonstration that the generative function of UG does not produce linear entities, that is, sentences composed of a serial and linear accumulation of words. Instead, the generative function organizes hierarchically structured sentences according to the categories of "specifier-head-complement." These are mapped lexical spaces in which the separation between terms or "words" occurs according to discreet infinity.²⁷ An important observation at this point: no matter how formalized Chomsky's demonstrations are of the generative function, in the early program of Standard Model, they are not *explicitly* set-theoretic, let alone mathematical.

However, this perspective has changed in the so-called "minimalist program," in what amounts to a subtle shift with major consequences, despite how much Chomsky argues against critics, such as John Searle, that a major shift has transformed the generative program. Still, in most

of his descriptions, I-language is considerably streamlined as compared, for instance, to the initial "deep structure" model. Furthermore, the minimalist program has been explicitly streamlined into the Biolinguistic Program, which is the model of UG that is most salient to set-theoretic consequences.²⁸

The Biolinguistic Program holds that the description of the language faculty, or "capacity," has to be significantly reduced in order to be adequate to an organic process. Second, the background perspective of the nature of the research project has slowly moved away from computation theory in the context of AI to biolinguistic parameters, as follows:

The most elementary property of our shared language capacity is that it enables us to construct and interpret a discrete infinity of hierarchically structured expressions: discrete because there are five-word sentences and six-word sentences, but no five-and-a-half-word sentences; infinite because there is no longest sentence. Language is therefore based on a recursive generative procedure that takes elementary word-like elements from some store, call it the lexicon, and applies repeatedly to yield structured expressions, without bound.²⁹

Chomsky goes on to emphasize that the main research question, apart from the lexicon, denoted as the "atoms of computation," is the nature of the generative function. In that sense, his claim that there is continuity in the overall research project is confirmed. Moreover, the project has undergone considerable sophistication as it has clearly overcome some of the shortcomings of the functionalism in its classic form, which especially sought to delimit psychological studies of behavior in the context of computation in artificial automata. As Chomsky writes, "it may be a bit misleading to say that [I-language] plays a role in my 'recent work.' It's not a new notion; rather, a new term, introduced in the hope of overcoming persistent misunderstanding of the technical notion "grammar."³⁰ In another context, he clarifies this position: "Since the origins of work in generative grammar in the 1950s, it has been pointed out that the term 'grammar' is being used with systematic ambiguity: to refer to the internal states of Jones's faculty of language (FL), and to the linguist's theory of that state. But that usage proved confusing. I therefore suggested that we restrict the term "grammar" ("particular" or "universal grammar") to the theories constructed by the linguist, and refer to the internal state that grammars seek to describe as I-languages ("I" to suggest internal, individual, intensional)."³¹

The set-theoretic claim is all the more interesting in that it is indexed to a process that Chomsky considers stable from an evolutionary point of view. In other words, UG is not the result of the so-called "evolution of language," nor does it have to be in the claim about being part of nature. Indeed, Chomsky has become one of the most outspoken adversaries of claims that language is inherently communicational and would have

evolved from earlier hominid species. Instead, he accredits the emergence of UG to what might be genetic mutation. Notwithstanding the specific sense of this term, its generality, abstraction and lack of identifiable location and time would make it, by definition, akin to an event in Badiou's theory of subject.

Still, whether mutation is truly an event is of secondary importance to this very focal knot between realism and nativism. Badiou remains non-committal regarding the innate, as he remains prudent about situating subjectivity in the brain, mind or language in any regulated fashion. From a speculative perspective, there are few if any philosophical enterprises that go the distance of bracketing the cognitive dimension in order to examine thought freed from naturalized subject/object paradigms. That this is a philosophical problem perhaps brands the endeavor with Continental flavor. After all, both Hegel and Heidegger sought to understand the notion of being from beyond any necessary objectification, or indeed *naturalization*. Nonetheless, Badiou's ontological decision in favor of a mathematical ontology places the latter in the dependence of another discourse, namely one in which the emergence of ordered and consistent multiplicities is derived from what there is—provided that what there is not be presupposed as understandable in any complete form.

In this regard, understanding being requires a minimal power of separating it from non-being, provided once again that the latter be at least delimited as that to which the mind lacks the cognitive capacity to think in itself. In this sense, it may be said to exceed the normative structure of historical discursive practices. This is where Badiou resorts to the notion of thought, which for the sake of the formal ontology and its syntactic construction differs from most attempts at understanding it on objective grounds.

From subjective grounds, thought is what is distributed universally. It affords the use, or indeed the "*creative aspect of language use*,"³² to seize what is the same for all thinking beings: the truth, and the practice of mathematics. The truth is the same for everyone. Mathematics is projectively the same for any culture. If the radically new has no previous articulation, and is thus extra-legal, or illegal, then one might surmise we are dealing with an experience that can only be described structurally as making a "leap" from "noise" to "word."³³ As Lasnik adds, "the ability to produce and understand new sentences is intuitively related to the notion of infinity. Infinity is one of the most fundamental properties of human languages, maybe the most fundamental one."³⁴ The production of new sentences is not ipso facto proof of a broader subjectivity in the making. But the link to infinity opens a line of thought which makes the radical originality of the Chomskyan model a potential map for ontology as a whole.

So Chomsky destroys the idea that the human mind works like a machine, and that language is merely a sequence of rules regulated by

statistical probability: in comes the idea of language acquisition. In a broader, perhaps non-orthodox reading of Chomsky's formalism, the framework of language acquisition is also that of the creativity specifically triggered by the subjectivity in formation that follows an event or mutation, always occurring locally and at a small level. The challenges and risks of the new subjective form emerging is one of acquired learning in addition to consultation and collective decision-making. This sequencing is straightforward in its causal pathway:³⁵

data → language faculty → language → structured expressions.

As a property of human languages, Chomsky and his team argue that the capacity to "capture" infinity is a fundamental aspect of the generative or Universal Grammar. The early form by which Chomsky would refer to this capacity is by locating special rules that in fact were the operations called "generalized transformations."³⁶

These transformations eventually encountered Norbert Wiener's theory of feedback in dynamic systems and soon became known as recursivity. The latter is a computational trait that, regarding Chomsky's UG, creates problems insofar as it begins to go the way of associating only metaphorically the human brain to a computational device, although the verifications his project was able to achieve had to do with UG, and not the brain architecture in its entirety.

Any such extrapolation is also what steers Badiou from neurocognitive speculation as there is no analytic correlation, he argues, between the subject and the brain, or indeed the mind. On the other hand, it is only the human mind/brain that can produce truth in the context of an infinite variety of assertions, though Badiou would contest an association with any particular human language per se. Strikingly, the discourse allowing for the infinite generation of structured variations from atomic elements is set theory. Chomsky's more recent concept of merge is explicitly in set-theoretic terms.

Merge is also what Chomsky purports to further explain his argument on the poverty of stimulus. What can be observed about language acquisition (in the child)? Poverty of stimulus: any language is acquired by children in an essentially spontaneous way, in a short period of time, and only at an age when their general intellectual skills look less powerful than those of adults (usually within the first four years of life). The idea that new speech forms that a speaker has not heard are produced by way of analogy with those he has heard, writes Chomsky,

is not wrong but rather is vacuous until the concept of analogy is spelled out in a way that explains why certain "analogies" are somehow valid whereas others are not. . . . We can give substance to the proposal by explaining "analogy" in terms of I-language, *a system of*

*rules and principles that assigns representations of form and meaning to linguistic expressions . . . but . . . with this necessary revision in the proposal, it becomes clear that "analogy" is simply an inappropriate concept in the first place.*³⁷

Merge is a two-sided operation. The externalized process is the very function producing the syntactic object that corresponds to a sentence in which words are juxtaposed in what appears as linear order. Internal merge, however, is more complex. It is the embodiment of what Chomsky has called "displacement," "the fact that we pronounce phrases in one position, but interpret them somewhere else as well."³⁸ Displacement is a process placing a term or phrase first then placing it again and remembering it, as it were, such as in the sentence form: "for which book *x*, John read the book *x*."³⁹ Displacement, as Chomsky explains, is not a copy-function. Internal merge produces simultaneously in *X* and in a merged *Y* (with *X*). Internal Merge, in the displacement function, is the execution of the principle of minimal computation, which accounts for the deletion of the copy.

Moreover, merge cannot be dissociated from the broader naturalist claim that guides all of Chomsky's commitment to generativity, which is the principle of *computational efficiency*, which links I-language with internal and external merge. It is a non-dialectical function, not far off from what Hegel stipulated as the minimal principle to change. In a very recent formulation, Chomsky explains how:

The simplest computational operation, embedded in some manner in every relevant computational procedure, takes objects *X* and *Y* already constructed and forms a new object *Z*. Call it Merge. The principle of Minimal Computation dictates that neither *X* nor *Y* is modified by Merge, and that they appear in *Z* unordered. Hence Merge: $(X, Y) = \{X, Y\}$.⁴⁰

Safeguards are quick to come with Chomsky's relentless commitment to detail: "That does not of course mean that the brain contains sets, as some current misinterpretations claim, but rather that whatever is going on in the brain has properties that can properly be characterized in these terms."⁴¹

Ever since Chomsky's work in the beginning of the century, the language faculty has grown narrower and narrower to be rid of rules and especially of the fundamental operation to generate sentences, which is neither structure nor causal determination. That cannot be the characterization of UG, since what we see in sentences is something quite unusual from the perspective of a conscious human being. It is far less so, he contends, from the perspective of a natural phenomenon, namely that sentences show a *hierarchical structure*, instead of a linear one.⁴² The sentence breakdown in X-Bar theory is his proof to this claim. Furthermore, from the perspective of the biolinguistic program, merge is optimally

recursion occurring in the phenomenon of “greatest structural proximity.” The latter also lies behind the formation of crystalline shapes in natural automata. Language is thus “something like a snowflake, assuming its particular form by virtue of laws of nature—in this case principles of computational efficiency—once the basic mode of construction is available, and satisfying whatever conditions are imposed at the interfaces.”⁴³

How important is merge for cognition? Or how relevant is merge to the notion of a transformational subjectivity triggered, in Badiou’s view, by a radical contingency in the state of a situation? To the extent that Chomsky argues that merge may account for the emergence of the language capability, even though it appears not to have been designed to execute it at least primarily, there is a convergence of views. Chomsky is reserved about locating a real origin, as is Badiou about a purported first event-triggered subjective form. Yet were either hypothesis confirmed, mutation and/or event come to causally structure a conception of language and subjectivity that is a condition *sine qua non* to emancipation from the decadence of a given state of things.

Chomsky no more than Badiou contends that this model can be isolated. Indeed, one of the main challenges to the models, once a move is made toward biological verification, is to decipher its contours in a process whose mode of externalization is part of the process of potentially continual creation. As Chomsky writes, “all recent relevant biological and evolutionary research leads to the conclusion that the process of externalization is secondary.”⁴⁴

The question that taunts philosophers is why would such a claim, *when it can be verified*, not be taken as a challenge to streamline ontology itself? Why would ontology insist on irreducibility to brain functions even when the latter are computationally derived from the set-theoretic axioms, as are the general properties of Being? It is as if Badiou’s thesis of ontology as mathematics does not go far enough, insofar as it maintains its commitment to immanence regarding integers in nature merely at the essentialist level. It appears to hastily draw the line over computation and recursivity as pertaining to the particularities of human being instead of those of the human brain, mainly due to the economic and cultural context in which Capital parasitically simplifies arithmetic to the purposes of accounting: “we live in the era of number’s despotism; thought yields to the law of denumerable multiplicities.”⁴⁵

In this sense, the lack of a broader recursive function in Badiou’s intrinsic ontology is a philosophical handicap. In reviewing the theory of subject, no such function can be located. The subject is non-conscious, and the condition for individualization lies at the level either of the individual or the group. It is immanent to individualization in the discursive practices, where the subject of the arts is a configuration of works; of the sciences, theories; that of the political, organizations; and of love: the Two. As such, building upon the irreducible difference between being

and existing, the subject is said *to be* whereas the state of the situation is the *domain of existence, that is, of representation, intentional consciousness and image production*. This is where immanence, nativism and the intrinsic meet and diverge. Even as life, or organic existence, necessarily involves the varied dimensions of materiality, what the general, abstract and singular concept of Being ends up prompting is a further inquiry into the relationship between life and what is not life.

The question is then: why focus on a theoretical science of Being qua Being for structuring discursive potentiality for the singularly new, instead of an experimental and empirical biological theory of linguistic practices, potentially infinite in extension? An answer would have to expand its methodological and conceptual scope. The problem with such an answer is that it presupposes referential identity in a vicious circle. On the other hand, nothing should limit the concepts of “life” and “nature” to the mere empirical, especially as set theory eventually can be replaced by these designators without risking semantic infiltration. Chomsky’s streamlining of UG is also part of this conceptual and theoretical struggle to rid it of aspects localized specifically in particular grammars.

Three factors interact to determine I-languages in this multidisciplinary perspective:

- genetic endowment (the topic of UG),
- experience, which leads to variation, within a fairly narrow range, and
- principles that are language- or even organism-independent. (e.g., language acquisition and developmental constraints, involving data processing and structural architectures, respectively).⁴⁶

In the biolinguistic program, the language faculty comes to stand as an “organ of the body” along with other cognitive systems. Chomsky and Berwick emphasize two questions of language pertinent to the nature of the program:

First, why are there any languages at all, evidently unique to the human lineage, what evolutionary biologists call an “autapomorphy?” Second, why are there so many languages? These are in fact the basic questions of origin and variation that so occupied Darwin and other evolutionary thinkers and comprise modern biology’s explanatory core: why do we observe *this* particular array of living forms in the world and not others? From this standpoint, linguistic science stands squarely within the modern biological tradition, despite its seemingly abstract details, as has often been observed.⁴⁷

Badiou has usually been silent about biology. The closest he has come to submitting his theory of subject to a biological framework can be found in his 1992 paper on the historian and philosopher of the life sciences George Canguilhem.⁴⁸ Badiou filters through Canguilhem’s work

and clears him of defending any psychological, transcendental or substantial theory of subject. This leads Badiou to isolate a singular theory of subject that builds upon the fundamental idea that the sick person is a subject who flees both the cool rationality of medical knowledge as well as the technical grasp of modern medicine.

The lived experience of the subject in the context of modern science is precisely the basis upon which Canguilhem performs an overhauling of the Cartesian subject (subject-object paradigm) in phenomenology. Canguilhem's theory of subject is even more relevant as mathematization of the life sciences is complex, and closer to human reality as far as a paradigm for science is concerned. The life sciences would also be endowed with the very *a priori* principles Badiou tends to commit to a formalist ontology, although they are as latent and implicit as any complete structure of truth. It is from a "clinical" perspective that Canguilhem also accomplishes a formalization of the subject:

Hence, in a certain sense Aristotle was not wrong to say that a certain kind of mathematics, the only mathematics he knew about, was of no use in understanding biological forms, forms determined by a final cause or totality, nondecomposable forms in which beginning and end coincide and actuality outweighs potentiality. [. . .] *If life is the production, transmission and reception of information, then clearly the history of life involves both conservation and innovation.*⁴⁹

The polar push and shove of conservation and innovation is how Badiou reads Canguilhem's portrayal of the emergence of the notion of universal, inert, indeed internal milieu, in the life sciences. In the fundamental shift that occurs in the seventeenth century, Canguilhem argues that man is no longer the middle of the universe, but becomes a middle space. Within that middle space, mankind created the human temporality necessary to constitute the infinite subject of knowledge. Chomsky shows that infinity is enabled in part by the generative system, which produces the infinite sentence expressions as a function of syntactical form and the series of natural numbers. Badiou's proximity to biology is but a step away as he makes Canguilhem's statement on the theory of subject his own:

Man makes mistakes because he does not know where to settle. He makes mistakes when he chooses the wrong spot for receiving the kind of information he is after. But he also gathers information by moving around, and by moving objects around, with the aid of various kinds of technology. Most scientific techniques, it can be argued, are in fact, nothing more than methods for moving things around and changing the relations among objects. Knowledge, then, is an anxious quest for the greatest possible quantity and variety of information. If the *a priori* is in things, if the concept is in life, then to be a subject of knowledge is simply to be dissatisfied with the meaning one finds ready at hand.

Subjectivity is therefore nothing other than dissatisfaction. Perhaps that is what life is.⁵⁰

When one considers how Chomsky portrays the knowledge acquired by the organism as it attains the motor development sufficient for the language faculty to generate syntactical form and externalize it through the lexical mapping and double interfaces, one can agree that the "concept is in life" and that "subjectivity is dissatisfaction." Chomsky's generative subject and Badiou's generic subject are transformational and creative. It is true that Chomsky's theory is universal, formally speaking, although nobody can claim that all humans reach the creative potential for transformational expressions afforded by set-theoretic recursion. Nor is Badiou's human animal at the heights of an ethically motivated, set-theoretically plotted subject. Given that both are projective, struggling for determination as singular expressive and creative entities, life, nature and being seem to converge quite explicitly in the formalism of a mathematical ontology.

OBJECTIONS TO THE COMPARISON

No more than is Badiou's intrinsic ontology, Chomsky's UG is not a language. It is the result of an event specific to the scientific condition according to which the conjecture that the diversity of human languages is accounted for by a capacity singularly located in the human brain and governed by our genetic endowment. The capacity for language is neither what is understood as communication nor as a language *per se*. So also is the event, in terms of Badiou's ontology, the creation of the generative enterprise. This is based on the counter-intuitive insight that all human languages are the result of a particular interface between a system that is innate to the human brain, and phonological, logical and historical parameters in which human communities diversify their language capacity in relation to specific geopolitical contexts.

As such, the detail of the subjective site in Badiou is akin to UG. Its unnamable is universality as a specific instance of the general category ascribed to the scientific condition, namely "non-contradiction." What this means is that UG is a revolutionary scientific subject if and only if it is universal to the human brain. The subject model is otherwise checked regarding the level of constraints that determine, though not consistently, the expansive possibilities of the subjective form (acceptability of the theory; the forming of a research community around it; attempts at refutation).

In the French structuralist tradition in which Alain Badiou was educated and trained, Chomsky's generative grammar was presented as an extension of Wittgenstein's later project of claiming essence to be expressed in grammar: "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is

(Theology as grammar)."⁵¹ For Badiou, especially as his ontology is mathematized, this position is untenable. As we saw and confirmed, Chomsky's linguistic theory and theory of UG has gone through important recasting perhaps most fundamentally in the Minimalist Program. It is in the latter that UG is finally stripped down to merge, a mathematical function that does not correspond, per se, to common understanding of what rules can accomplish. But Chomsky's final position, though, does not give up on rules. Indeed, creativity and freedom are the result of them. They are merely placed further in the string of biological developments that already occur at great speed in the organism's motor development. As he states, "The conditions that prevent a human embryo from becoming an insect play a critical role in determining that it can become a human, and the same holds in the cognitive domain." Nothing in this suggests that rules are merely unidirectional, as "when creative work challenges and revises prevailing rules."⁵² However, it does suggest that beyond human nature there is a *subject nature*.

Does a formalism derived from this commitment to rule-generated freedom and emancipation perform a reduction? In part it does, as it has to. It can be argued that ever since Kant's crafting of autonomy as partaking in the creation and the dutiful observance of the moral law, philosophy has had to accept that part of its striving for universal claims is to proceed by means of a reduction. Moreover, achieving rational coherence within the structure of Platonic *dianoia*, or argumentative discourse on and about mathematical objects, has always depended upon a formalist substructure to guarantee the fluidity of inference.

Opposition to Badiou's thesis on ontology has come from two directions. First, it is argued that Set Theory cannot alone account for the completeness of ontology, given the theorems on incompleteness. Observe that just as Badiou respects the paradoxes of Set Theory—Russell's paradox and Cantor's earlier paradox, when it makes any claim for completeness in the guise of a set of all sets (or class of all classes)—so also does Gödel's incompleteness theorem set the upper bounds, or parameters, of ontology. There are assertions, indeed sentences, produced within the different speech act (or discursive practice) scenarios (i.e., the conditions) that have no coherence with respect to the axioms of the ontology. Some of these are anti-ethical, others are simply imaginary or plainly irrational, *as far as the verification of truth claim is concerned*. But Badiou's reading of the Löwenheim-Skolem theorem also points to the unorthodox venture that if a novel truth were indeed possible, it would not derive from a deductive structure, but from a hypothetical construction within the non-denumerable.⁵³

Now, the non-denumerable is ultimately the unknown, but as Gödel has shown, and as Pierce and Wittgenstein suggested, the outer reaches of what can be said, identified and/or counted, can maintain coherence provided it be grounded hypothetically according to the axioms. Badi-

ou's most challenging conjecture is not so much that ontology is set-theoretic, but that the non-denumerable is as well, albeit in incomplete form. A skeptic will surely object that the former claim is as intrinsically set-theoretic as any other characterization might be. To counter this objection, Paul Cohen's argument on the indeterminacy of the continuum hypothesis is used to demonstrate the claim that insofar as the technical definition here of subject is coherent as a universal, indeed natural structure, its truth structure can only be forced in a formalist or generic sense. In other words, Cohen's argument manages to extend set-theoretic consistency to the non-denumerable, provided that no properties, no reference, be attributed to what comes down to a mere name.

How can one test the intrinsic nature of this claim? Only minimally, as stated in the introduction, the radically new lacks the markers of its new shape and body. As indiscernible to other subjective forms, it nonetheless must be part of the situation, for otherwise it would be merely epiphenomenal, or defeated in idealism. So, it is here especially, that Badiou's ontology requires the intrinsic claim over and beyond the immanent. Canguilhem bet little in his epistemology on what the radically new could bring. As we saw, the production of mistakes holds the latency to future truths. The generic is not free of mistakes by any means, but what we ought to correct is that the theory of the generic is not grounded as body space, just as the subject is merely a postulated space for preconscious decision-making. After all, a formal subject is the same as a formal body. What is gained is the subsumption of being to life, which is perhaps where an inverted realism is destined to take us. Badiou's materialism is broad enough to absorb a fundamental vitalist thesis, and it is powerful enough to transform it into a key aspect of the subject in the way suggested by Chomsky's Biolinguistic Program, especially without having to forsake the mathematical ontology.

CONCLUSION

As revolutionary science, in Badiou's system Chomsky's biolinguistics points to returning to the ontological project. The task especially is to link life as a formal space to the set-theoretic theorems. This claim in itself oddly locates Chomsky at a point removed from any broader thesis on the linguistic turn of philosophy and the social sciences. Indeed, Chomsky does not consider linguistics to be a social science per se. It is affected to the minimum by the subjective uncertainty of both the researcher and the agents of research, and thus produces in as complete a scientific fashion as does physics. He has indeed called for philosophy to release its decades-long reliance on physics as the prototype of a field of theoretical scientific practice, as philosophy itself cannot be availed of agency. This is doubtless true even in philosophies seeking to ground agency in a broad-

er transcendental metaphysics, all the while maintaining free will as inseparable from human being. In recent decades, though, communication, emotional expression theories and even theories of belief and knowledge have been extended as capacities to various non-human animal species.

Yet the structure of this communication system is distinct from the human language faculty. First, non-human animals demonstrate no expression of temporal difference. Second, as shown in research on Bonobo apes, animals can associate at best three word-symbols in a string. And, third, the association process is not one of reference, but of word-symbol to word-symbol, which throws in doubt whether non-human animals use “words” *per se*, or term and lexicon items. As Chomsky explains, “it appears to be the case that animal communication systems are based on a one-one relation between mind/brain processes and ‘an aspect of the environment to which these processes adapt the animal’s behavior.’ If so, the gap between human language and animal communication is as dramatic in this domain as in the domains of language structure, acquisition, and use, and inquiry into origins will have to look elsewhere.”⁵⁴

Approaching Chomsky’s theory of I-language to Badiou’s intrinsic ontology also presents a rigorous framework to consider thought independently from consciousness and conscious processes, notwithstanding what are perhaps necessary streams of externalization and the constitution of referential realities based on natural kinds and cultural prototypes. The objective ideals of the intrinsic ontology and I-language are part of a rationalist dedication that is skeptical of the semantic, pragmatic and prosaic contexts from which broader theories of mind are explicitly inferred—and bounded. Formally speaking, neither Universal Grammar nor intrinsic ontology submits to a logic of identification in the first moment, but to a dynamic process of mapping and recursivity.

Scientific pressure can thus show positive manifestations on philosophical practice. It is simply counterproductive to deny the importance of accessing the most up-to-date experimental research upon which current philosophical theories of consciousness are shaped. Yet the institution of scientific research is often hostile to philosophy as it solicits it at the same time for very clear reasons. The scientific ideal cannot both guide and limit philosophy. What philosophy ought to gasp, though, is the changing nature of scientific research programs, and seize the most daring in order to test its formal structure so as to plausibly keep crafting a more coherent ontology, precisely in the way Badiou has shown. The refusal to refer to oneself as a philosopher when articulating the formalist principles and parameters of a philosophical system is ultimately a political act (in a scientific sense), when it is not simply opportunistic (in the most vulgar or, more fashionably, psychopathological sense).

NOTES

1. Desanti, J. -T. "Quelques remarques à propos de l'ontologie intrinsèque d'Alain Badiou," *Les Temps Modernes* 526 (May 1990), 61–71.

2. Alain Badiou, *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, translated and with an introduction by N. Madarasz (Albany: State University of New York Press), 110–111.

3. A. J. Bartlett and A. Ling, "Translator's Introduction," in Alain Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, edited, translated and with an introduction by A. J. Bartlett and A. Ling, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 7.

4. By contrast, analytic epistemology seems to inevitably be linked to scepticism, which would count out a realist ontology almost by definition. Consider S. G. Shanker's observations on the intrusion of epistemology into mathematics and the consequences on the foundations crisis in *Wittgenstein and the Turning-Point in the Philosophy of Mathematics* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 267. In light of this, Badiou will break with epistemology altogether, in either its French or analytic versions.

5. Alain Badiou, "Afterword: Some Replies to a Demanding Friend," in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, edited by Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 223.

6. For example, P. M. Churchland, *Neurophilosophy at Work* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Jesse Prinz, *The Conscious Brain. How Attention Engenders Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 2012), and Ruth Millikan, *Language: A Biological Model* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

7. David Webb, "Cavaillès and the Historical A Priori in Foucault," in *Virtual Mathematics: The Logic of Difference*, edited by Simon Duffy (Manchester, UK: Clinamen Press, 2006), 118–144.

8. Alain Badiou, *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, translated and with an introduction by Bruno Bosteels (New York: Verso, 2011).

9. Cf., Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*.

10. For example, in Noam Chomsky, *Language and Problems of Knowledge: The *Managua Lectures** (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), and "What Kind of Creatures Are We?: i. What Is Language? ii. What Can we Understand? iii. What is Common Good?" *The Journal of Philosophy* 12 (December 2013), 645–700.

11. L. Wittgenstein, cited in Shankar, 270.

12. Chomsky, "What Kind of Creatures Are We?," 652

13. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008).

14. Noam Chomsky, *The Minimalist Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), and "Three Factors in Language Design," *Linguistic Inquiry* Vol. 36:1 (Winter 2005), 1–22.

15. This can easily be seen as Badiou's broader discussion on Mallarmé's Throw of the Dice (BE Med. 19) and Beckett's writing of the generic (C).

16. Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 127.

17. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, translated and edited by G. Di Giovanni (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 204.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 204.

20. In this regard, Hegel had already aimed, and indeed achieved, what Husserl saw as the major setback in Galileo's merger of mathematics and physics. In the *Krisis*, part II section 9 on "Galileo's mathematization of nature," for example, Husserl writes that: "in order to clarify the formation of Galileo's thought, we must accordingly reconstruct not only what consciously motivated him. It will also be instructive to bring to light what was implicitly included in his guiding model of mathematics, even though, because of the direction of his interest, it was kept from his view: as a hidden, presupposed meaning (*als verborgene Sinnesvoraussetzung*) it naturally had to enter into his physics along with everything else." Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sci-*

ences and Transcendental Philosophy: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy, translated by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962), 24–25.

21. *Science of Logic*, 207, in which he cites I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A430/B458–A432–460.

22. *Ibid.*, 215.

23. *Ibid.*, xliii.

24. For example, A. Connes, “Entretien avec Anne Ségat et Gérard Cartier,” in *Secousses* 6 (March 2012), 3, <http://www.revue-secousse.fr/Secousse-06/Sks06-Sommaire.html>. accessed March 28, 2014.

25. Noam Chomsky, *Perspectives on Power: Reflections on Human Nature and the Social Order* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1997), 40.

26. *Ibid.*, 43.

27. Howard Lasnik, with Marcela Depiante and Arthur Stepanov, *Syntactic Structures Revisited: Contemporary Lectures on Classic Transformational Theory* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2000), 128.

28. Noam Chomsky and R. C. Berwick, “The Biolinguistic Program: The Current State of Its Development,” in *The Biolinguistic Enterprise. New Perspectives on the Evolution and Nature of the Human Language Faculty*, edited by Anna Maria di Sciullo and Cedric Boeckx (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19–41.

29. *Ibid.*, 27.

30. Noam Chomsky, “Reply to Egan,” in *Noam Chomsky and his Critics* Louis B. Anthony, Norbert Hornstein eds. (New York: Blackwell, 2003) p. 270.

31. *The Science of Language: Interviews with James MacGilvray*, edited by N. Chomsky and J. MacGilvray (London: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

32. Lasnik et al., 3.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. Noam Chomsky, *Language and the Problems of Knowledge. The Managua Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 35.

36. Lasnik et al., 23.

37. Chomsky, *Language and the Problems of Knowledge*, 32 (my emphasis).

38. Chomsky and Berwick, 31.

39. Chomsky, “What Kind of Creatures Are We?,” 656.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*, 652–53.

43. Chomsky and Berwick, 30; Chomsky, “What Kind of Creatures are We?,” 662.

44. Chomsky and Berwick, 32; Chomsky, “What Kind of Creatures are We?,” 654.

45. Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, translated by Robin Mackay (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 1.

46. Noam Chomsky, “Three Factors in Language Design,” *Linguistic Inquiry* 36:1 (Winter 2005), 6.

47. Chomsky and Berwick, 19.

48. “Y a-t-il une théorie du sujet chez Canguilhem,” re-printed in *L’Aventure de la philosophie française: depuis les années 1960* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2012), 65–79.

49. *A Vital Rationalist: Selected Writings from Georges Canguilhem*, edited by François Delaporte and translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 318.

50. *Ibid.*, 319.

51. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th edition, edited and translated by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulteeds (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 373.

52. Chomsky, “What Kind of Creatures Are We?,” 684.

53. See Paul Livingston, “Badiou, Mathematics and Model Theory” (unpublished manuscript, 2011), and *The Politics of Logic* (London: Routledge, 2012).

54. Chomsky, “What Kind of Creatures Are We?,” 678, quoting R. Gallistel, “Representations in Animal Cognition: An Introduction,” *Cognition*, XXVII, 1–2 (November 1990), 1–22.

SEVEN

Badiou and Hegel on Love and the Family

Jim Vernon

One of the most surprising connections between Badiou and Hegel is that they equally make love an essential actualization of the genuine subject. Both thinkers affirm love as a central vehicle for subjects to emerge from the immediate egoism of situational givenness to reveal the capacity for infinite thought beyond our corporeal finitude. As Badiou puts it, one loves “someone living, standing there in front of you,” but that someone qua lover “cannot be reduced to this simple material presence.”¹ Rather, love reflects our “capacity to pass from the sensible to something that is vaster and more essential” than mere corporeal existence,² or, in Hegel’s words, love reveals that we can “give up [our] natural and individual personalities” in order to obtain the “substantial self-consciousness [which] is in fact [our] liberation.”³ Moreover, against romantic or anti-philosophical dogma, which relegates love to the status of a vague or ineffable sentiment, both thinkers offer austere and rigorous theories of love equally subtracted from religious ceremony, parental pressure, intense feeling, and procreative urge. However, where Badiou pits genuine love against the contractual family, Hegel valorizes the family, or marriage, against merely sentimental love.

In this essay, I argue that this difference is attributable to their divergent accounts of the structure of the loving couple. While affirming the pair as the core measure of love, Badiou argues that it is necessarily grounded in, and defined by, a contingent encounter that opens up formerly self-sufficient individuals to the experience of a disjunctive duality. That is, in love two people do not become one in a relation of fusion,

sentiment, or even support; to the contrary, in love the One common to two self-sufficient individuals becomes Two precisely by voiding all of the relationships that might tie individuals to each other. By contrast, Hegel claims that love unites two distinct individuals in a new, but definable, relation in which both freely consent to give up their previous determinations in order to find the good for them both in the relation with each other.

In the course of explicating their respective accounts of love, I argue for the superiority of Hegel's over Badiou's, first for the ease with which it can be liberated from any theory of sexual difference as vital to love (a reactionary addition curiously common to both accounts), and second for laying bare more rigorously and plausibly the nature of love as a commitment undertaken by two. I close with some schematic comments on the import of their theories of love for their general accounts of subjectivity and humanity.

BADIOU: ONE BECOMES TWO, OR FIDELITY WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP

If there is one fundamental thesis to Badiou's account of love, it is that "Love is essentially when there are two, rather than one" (PE 39). There are, however, in fact two different ones that haunt the two; one which pre-exists the dawn of love and seeks to ward it off, and one which arises in love's wake and threatens to destroy it. It is by tracing the varied relations between the one and the two that we can best grasp Badiou's account of love as a truth procedure.

Before falling in love, Badiou plausibly claims, an individual is a determinate one, that is, a self-identical collection of interests, habits and drives, which seeks to preserve itself into its future. Such a one is defined, then, by its drive towards pleasure, or the satisfaction of previously given desires. As such, each pre-loving individual is tempted to avoid risk, or to evade the effects of chance that might interrupt the preserved continuity of its singular identity. Of course, many such ones have desires for companionship, tenderness, perhaps children, while others, by contrast, seek only transitory satisfaction, grasping love as "variations on the theme of sex";⁴ nevertheless the self-identity of all such individuals can still be preserved in what Badiou calls the "safety-first concept of 'love'" (PL 6). Dating services, for example, (cf., PL 5–10) match your current habits and desires with those of another, with whom you might come to terms such that a functional partnership—be it a transitory one of mere "libertinage" or a stable one in which "the advantages that one person obtains equitably balance those obtained by the other" (MS 48)—can emerge. For Badiou, however, this is not true love, but a "negotiation between two egoisms" (PE 44). As such, there is precious little difference

between modern matchmaking techniques and “the logic of arranged marriage” (PE 42), for both ultimately reduce love to a mere “contract between two free and equal individuals” (MS 48) designed to secure goals external to the pairing itself. This narcissistic love allows both participants to remain “consolidated bundles of interests and identities,”⁵ and simply adds to them contractual obligations not dissimilar to those they have with their employers or the state, which are entered into or maintained only to preserve some of those merely given interests. This is not love, for Badiou, but rather a mere *relationship*, and genuine love is thwarted so long as individuals rest in the “fallacious assumption that it is a relationship [for] it is not” (C 182).

While he essentially ignores the hedonistic variant as irrelevant, for few would claim it bears any real relation to love, Badiou’s general name for the enduring form of this contractual coupling is the *family*. Unlike love, he claims, the family, qua relationship, is essentially and strictly tied to the existence of the previously given individuals. Thus, the family’s purpose is external to itself, resting in the egotistical desire for, and economic necessity of, the continuation of self-interest, even if primarily through “the continuation of the species” (PE 50). The family, like love, creates a “scene of two,” but as a *relationship* entered into with the aim of preserving individual identity and/or producing future interested individuals through children; as such, it “closes itself up within a collective narcissism” (PE, 51). Love, then, is not familial; to the contrary, just as politics aims at the withering away of the state, so “love should ideally organize the withering away of the family” in order to “free the scene of the Two from family egoism” (PE 50–1). This can only occur if “love splits each individual’s narcissistic unity in such a way that it opens up an experience of the world that is taken on as the experience of the two” (PE, 39–40). Love, then, does not augment, complete, or otherwise actualize anything present in the mere individuals who fall in love. Rather, any love worthy of the name “shatters the primary units” as ones compelled by habit, drive, and desire “and establishes the reign of the Two” over them in a new, wholly unrelated order (PE, 40).

Since continuity organizes the egocentric, contractual relation of the family, in order to oppose love to it, Badiou must ground the latter in that which escapes the seeming determination of biology, economics, habit, and interest. Love cannot rest upon human nature, or essence, since these would be to a large degree reflected, or at least intimated, in the pre-loving ones. Thus, as with all four of his truth procedures, Badiou begins by opposing the everyday state of affairs reflected in mere human behavior to a contingent and inexplicable event subtracted from it, yet revealing its truth. In the case of love, this event is called the “amorous encounter” (C 184). This encounter, like all events, is “contingent and disconcerting” because it cannot “enter into the immediate order of things” (PL 29;

28). Arguably, this is the most intuitively plausible of Badiou's four kinds of event. As he succinctly explains, a love begins when, for example:

I'm introduced to a co-worker from the office or someone else. What we're dealing with is almost minimal. Sometimes it happens that you feel right away that it's important. On other occasions, you feel nothing at all like this at the time. There are loads of variations in this domain. What interests me here is the contingency. It's striking to see [. . .] this pure contingency of the amorous origin. [. . .] The simple fact of "boy meeting girl" in the street, through an exchange of glances in the street or at church. (PE, 42)

Love begins, then, with an experience whose difference from the everyday world of egoism is unspecifiable, and whose ultimate importance evades all rational justification. We sexually desire a hundred people a day, and ignore or forget countless others, but for some reason, this one time, either immediately or after an inexplicable gap, someone captures us in a manner that defies comprehension or explanation. Before the encounter, there are only solitudes, objectively definable by their essentially utilitarian relations with their situation and those who populate it. After it, everything changes, and for reasons expressible to no one else; there are countless people smarter, funnier, more attractive, more caring, and so on in our situation, and nothing determines us to even meet this one, let alone attend to them, let alone to eventually somehow decide to build a life with them. Nothing within the situation, then, justifies the amorous encounter that explodes our self-sufficient oneness. This is precisely why love is opposed to the family because it reveals the "contradiction between an absolutely contingent origin and an absolutely prepared one" that is determined by the biological, desirous, or other egotistical and/or social pressures that legitimate contractual relations (PE 42).

Neither verifiable, nor justifiable, the amorous encounter can thus only be preserved through a kind of subjective and seemingly irrational *belief* in its life-changing importance. That is, love is not "a sort of mechanical consequence" of the encounter, for the latter, qua "contingency" is subtracted from the order of rational or causal necessity (PE 43). Nothing proves that "this almost non-existent something" (PE 43) even occurred, and thus nothing necessarily follows from it. Love, then, only arises from the encounter if one explicitly *declares* it to be more than it appears, for example, if a glance on the subway is affirmed by those who shared it to be of pivotal importance for them and them alone. The lovers reveal the eventual status of the encounter in so far as they retroactively declare it to have been the origin of a life-changing sequence that is not deducible from it; that is there must come "a moment when the encounter is sealed by the declaration: 'I love you'" (PE 43). This declaration "is inscribed in the structure of the event itself" (PL 40), in that the amorous nature of the encounter only endures through it; nevertheless, the declar-

ation does not necessarily follow from the event (one can always declare that it was a passing fancy, return to egoism, etc.). Moreover, it is still the case that nothing in particular follows from the declaration. The encounter neither determines *that* we love, for only the declaration tells us *that's* what the event meant; nor does the declaration tell us *how* we love, for the event it declares evades the order of justification. Rather, both the declaration of the status of the encounter and the love that follows in its wake can result only from an irreducibly subjective act of *fidelity* which "designates a kind of norm that I impose upon myself, one which consists in not abandoning this decentering [. . .] for reasons strictly related to my fundamental narcissism or my irreducible singularity" (PE 49). One acts in fidelity to the amorous encounter nominated by the declaration of love to the extent that a radically new "subject that consists, precisely, of this new orientation of experience rendered possible by an inaugural event" arises in its wake (PE 49); to be a lover, in short, one must "re-value [. . .] the totality of experience [. . .] the whole situation" (C 189) in light of the amorous encounter, or "abandon oneself, rigorously, to the unfolding of [the event's] consequences. Fidelity implies that [love] can only be cruelly indifferent to the private [individual] as such."⁶ Love, then, is "essentially disinterested: its value resides in itself alone and goes beyond the immediate interests of the two individuals involved" (PL 73).

While fidelity "means precisely that transition from random encounter to a construction that is resilient, as if it had been necessary" (PL 44), this transition can, of course, be enacted in a variety of ways. Since nothing specific or positive can be deduced from either the encounter or the declaration, it is up to the lovers themselves to determine how best to construct "a different way of lasting in life" and thus "love is a re-invention of life" (PL 33). This re-invention, qua construction of truth, must involve all aspects of one's life, since it must completely raise both lovers out of their immediate interests such that they are "incorporated into this unique Subject, the Subject of love that views the panorama of the world through the prism of [their] difference" (PL 26). But this construction, arising from a contingent event and built upon an unjustifiable declaration, forces the lovers to create a new way of seeing and living in the world, point by point, with literally no guide. "This is why, as everyone knows, it is on the order of hard labor, which is the limping march" of love's process in the world,⁷ as it investigates all that must be changed in light of the amorous encounter, for example, "living together, social representation, outings, speech, work, trips away, conflicts, children," and so on (C 192). All must be altered in order to testify to the new subject that supersedes the mere individual, but no knowledge or reason guides their process of re-invention. In so far as it shatters our egotistical normalcy, admits of no justification or positive prescription, and thus allows for no pre-ordained pattern of behavior, thereafter, love "is violent, irresponsible, and creative" (MS 49).

However, while there can, by definition, be no strict plan for subjective fidelity to the amorous encounter, because love is founded on an unjustifiable contingency and violently breaks those who declare it from their former situation, the Two that it constructs faces the threat of a second one, which would kill it. This is the romantic conception of love which "absorbs love in the encounter" (PL 30). Because love finds its ground in an event that exceeds the order of normal representation, or "in a magical moment outside the world as it really is," the lovers can define their love exclusively through it, as though it marked the true and sole knowledge of their love, and thus grasp their coupling as "a heroic act for One" achieved relation "enacted against the world" that remains unchanged, and whose reason denies its achieved truth (PL 30). Rather than creatively forming a new experience of the world in fidelity to the event, such romantic lovers find it "impossible to go back to a world that remains external to the relationship" (PL 31). This conception of love, "the highest point of which no doubt is Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*," treats love as a miracle explicitly known, and known only, by the couple, but one essentially denied by the world, and thus which can never be understood by or lived within it by those unified in the new knowledge (PL 30–1); as such, it can only be fully enacted in mutual death. Once again turning love into a relationship, and thus a unity, the romantic conception pits the fused couple against a world permanently hostile to their contingent miracle, forcing them to retreat into the egotism of "an encounter leading to meltdown" (PL 30).

Thus, for Badiou love's greatest danger lays in objectifying of the Scene of Two into one of two ones: the egotism of the contractual family which wards it off on the one hand, and the ecstatic drive towards shared death that thwarts it on the other. What links them is conceiving of love as unifying the participants in a definable relation, either that of familial stability or of secret knowledge. How, then, can love be defined outside of the form of unity? If the "declaration of the 'I love you' kind seals the act of the encounter [. . .] and constitutes a commitment" (PL 35), to what does it commit us if not some manner of positive relationship?

In perhaps the most counter-intuitive move of his entire theory of love, Badiou argues that what is fundamentally constructed in the course of love is, precisely, an absolute and essential "separation" (PE 61) between the lovers. This "disjunction," Badiou claims, "is not observable; it cannot be the object of an experience" (C 183). After all, the new living arrangements, behaviors, and habits of the lovers will, to all external observers, make them look like a related family. As such, this disjunction can only be an axiomatic and subjective *decision*, rather than an empirical derivation or phenomenological description. Nevertheless, if love is to truly be a scene of Two, without collapsing into a familial or ecstatic one, then in love "[e]verything [must be] presented in such a way that no coincidence can be attested between what affects one position and what

affects the other" in the scene (C 183). This rules out not only a common experience of relation between the lovers, but two complementary ones, such that they together form a dialectical whole. Thus, the endurance of love depends on the absolute separation between two positions that do not form themselves into a related couple. Rather, love exists to the extent that the lovers continually testify to the fact that "there is no sexual relationship" (C 191).

This, of course, is an idea that "Badiou adopts [. . .] more or less as is from Lacanian theory,"⁸ leading as well to his Lacanian account of the sexed positions that form the loving Subject: the Man (who "supports the split of the Two" by organizing experience around the statement "What will have been true is that we were two and not at all one" [C 194]) and the Woman (who "makes the Two endure in wandering" by organizing experience around the statement "What will have been true is that two we were, and that otherwise we were not" [C 194]). The precise justification for adopting Lacan's account of sexuation is never fully given by Badiou, save in that he holds that in "the order of love, of the thinking of what it conveys with respect to truths, the work of Jacques Lacan constitutes an event" (MP 81), much as the developments of Schoenberg or Cantor mark events in the fields of music and mathematics. However, what is clear is that *some* split into distinct positions *necessarily* follows from his over-arching drive to distinguish love from a relationship; the only question concerns why these positions must be sexed. Since the individuals who are swept up in it have natural, or through lived behavior will develop new, desires, interests, and habits that constantly threaten to thwart love by diverting its construction into the family, then love demands that the individuals submit even their bodies to the new truth of the encounter. As such, the lovers must be, as it were, *re-sexed* by a "differential marking of bodies" which forces the truth of the encounter into their mere coupling, and in a way, moreover, that ensures that "no subject can occupy both positions at the same time and in the same respect" lest the pair fall back into a relationship (C 190; 193). The positions, then, must be radically distinct, if not opposed, lest they fall into dialectical or contractual unity. Thus, while another event in the wider discourse of love may sweep away, or at least modify, Lacan's account of the sexed positions, for Badiou it is ineradicable and essential to love that sexed positions arise, such that the bodies and habits of the lovers be permanently altered by the encounter, and they must be altered such that they remain, in every way, absolutely separated from each other. In order to stave off the relationship that most mere individuals seem to desire, the lovers must assume different embodied comportments towards their love, for "[l]ove teaches [. . .] that the individual as such is something vacuous and insignificant" (MS 49). Thus, the assumption of sexed positions, post-love, is essential to the process of withering away the inclinations towards family, which constantly threatens the new subject with

mere individuality, while simultaneously building on the event, to avoid the ecstatic drive towards death. As such, while Badiou admits that both men and women can be Man or Woman, the transformation of the lovers must be total, down to embodiment, and thus each must assume a new, and distinct sex, for "love does not deal with the same body as [mere individual] desire, even as this body is precisely 'the same'" (C 190). It is, however, perhaps telling that he suggests that the "masculine position is fairly often occupied by men" (PE 62) and that women usually occupy the Woman position (Cf., C 195). In every case, however, love rises above embodiment to a truth that must be forced onto it, down to the assumption of a new "sex."

This total transformation leads to the final aspect of Badiou's account of love that we will consider: its essential *eternity*. If love has an enemy, as we have seen, it is not the rival, who seeks to steal one of the lovers away; rather, "love's main enemy, the one I must defeat, is not the other, it is myself, the 'myself' that prefers identity to difference" (PL 60). It is precisely to defeat this enemy, as we have seen, that lovers must occupy new positions of sexual difference, for love requires those that form its subject to be "subsumed by the impersonal vector of truth" introduced by its event,⁹ leaving no trace of their former selves behind. As such, "every love states that it is eternal: it is assumed within the declaration" (PL 47), for to love means to forsake previous individuality in full for the new consequences of the encounter's truth. Consequently, love is indifferent to the desires and merely psychological feelings and thoughts of the lovers. Having once declared fidelity to an event, one faces the—seemingly ethical, since, as noted, no causal or logical necessity follows—"necessity to be faithful to it, and all the more so in that it [inevitably] traverses storms, temptations, and separations" (PE 49). Indeed, Badiou re-interprets Lacan's ethical maxim "do not give up on your desire" into his own command, "do not give up on your own seizure by a truth-process."¹⁰ Since love is grounded in an event that constitutes the truth of their new subjectivity, rather than any kind of particular relationship, lovers are axiomatically subject to previous declarations of that truth, regardless of their current feelings or situation as they are affected by that declaration, evidently regardless of personal pain, and even brutality, for "love cannot be reduced to the lovers' psychology [. . .] love is a subject that is somewhat beyond psychology" (PE 49). Since love is a truth to which individuals are subject, in cold indifference to their lived feelings and situation, "[p]utting an end to love is always disastrous. Even if you can accept, even desire this disaster, the rupture remains, nonetheless, intrinsically disastrous" (PE 49). To renounce a love is, for Badiou, akin to reneging on a political principle which, equally, is indifferent to the contemporary desirability or effects of the previous decision, either for its adherents or for others in their situation (cf., PL 76).

What, then, of lovers whose experiments of the world as Two have revealed themselves to make life unlivable together? What of a love which, to all external observers, and even to the lovers themselves, has effectively ended due to the pain, abuse, or even just total indifference endured within it? *Prima facie*, it would seem that they should simply bear their psychological, even physical, suffering to preserve an eternal truth above their mere interests. Having declared their love, the pair would now have to simply endure the consequences, come what may. In a revealing interview, however, Badiou informs us that it is indeed possible to move on to other loves, so long as one does not abandon their previous ones. While the rationale for this claim is not explicit, it appears to be grounded in the claim that love is a separation rather than a partnership, and thus only exists in the subjective fidelity of the lovers, rather than in any specific relation that obtains between them. "Love," as he puts it citing Pessoa, "is a thought" rather than a feeling, behavior, situation, specific commitment, and so on (PL 87). Such a thought, militantly testified to only in fidelity to a lack of relation, can thus presumably exist in only one lover, who remains convinced that s/he continues to experience the world from the position of the Two. Just as one can never know that the amorous encounter actually occurred, one can never know that one's love is shared, since it is organized around a disjunction between two unrelated experiences of the world. Fidelity, after all, is not proven by any act and therefore cannot be broken by any distance. Rather, love's truth can, through the strictly subjective belief of one confident in their own fidelity, eternally remain, even many loves down the road, and with apparently equal intensity and truth, simply because "'I love you' is always [. . .] the heralding of 'I'll always love you'" (PL 47), in whatever sense a lover might intend that phrase at any point in the limping march of fidelity to the declaration. As such, Badiou can rest "assured by the fact that the women I have loved I have loved for always" (PL 47), even, one presumes, after he has long lost contact with some in any recognizable sense of sharing a life and, moreover, even if some think him a renegade to a previous declaration of fidelity by taking up residency with another lover. Love, then, is less a scene of two, then it is *an experiencing of the world as two by one*, in whatever form they explicitly intend it at any time.

In sum: For Badiou, love is a truth procedure, not a relationship. Arising in an unprovable encounter, it exists only through those who declare, and remain faithful to, it. They only do so, however, to the extent that, with cruel indifference to their own well-being and interests, they radically reconstruct themselves and their relations to the world such that an absolute lack of relation arises between them and guides their experiences. While this requires the assumption of a non-biological "sex" (albeit one that is couched, perhaps necessarily, in heterosexist terms),¹¹ necessarily disjunct from that of the other who forms the Scene of Two, it imposes no other constraints on the lovers, whose fidelity is not defined

by cohabitation, caring support, or even apparently speaking to each other. So long as at least one of the lovers is assured in thought that their love remains through their fidelity, it does, for no specific relationship exists to demonstrate the truth or falsity of such a claim. In the end, then, any Don Juan might claim that each discarded partner was and is genuinely loved forever and eternally, in revolutionary fidelity against the family, with no one (including and especially the discarded) able to raise a reproach. Absolutely and essentially separated, Badiou's lovers actualize themselves in isolation as necessarily sexed subjects in and through their declared fidelity to a truth, rather than a person or relationship, and one that that evades both justification and critique.

HEGEL: TWO BECOME ONE, OR RELATION AS EMANCIPATION¹²

Like Badiou, Hegel finds in love a transformative experience grounded in an element subtracted from the merely given contingencies of one's embodied situation. Unlike Badiou, however, for Hegel this element does not contingently and mysteriously arise to be grasped only by the lovers, but is essential and universal to humanity as a whole. Moreover, this universal essence, while subtracted from finitude, is not strictly opposed to our pre-loving state. Rather, it forms a dialectical unity with the mere individuals who are to become loving subjects, defined by their desires, situation, interests, and so on. It is for precisely these reasons that Hegel treats love under the heading of the family, and more narrowly marriage, for he finds in it less the subjection of individuals to an austere, unverifiable truth, than an institutional actualization of universal human essence that is of necessity related to, even if not defined by, sexual desire and habitual coupling.

If we were to reduce, as we did with Badiou, Hegel's account of love to one essential thesis, it would no doubt be that love's "objective origin is the free consent of the persons concerned, and in particular their consent to constitute a single person" (§162). The key term here is the *free consent* which may be offered by two individuals to form themselves into a new unity, defining of their subjectivity, which arises only through such an offering. While such claims are certainly more commonplace in discussions of love than Badiou's rigid disjunction, the controversy here is that Hegel virtually identifies love with marriage (not the reverse), and thus with a social, or in Hegel's jargon ethical (*sittlich*), institution that seems to an extent external to the consenting lovers themselves. Love is less a feeling, for Hegel, than an ethical duty; specifically, the duty for two to relate to each other as though they were one. As such, everything in Hegel's account rests on the ethical ground from which true love can be said to arise, such that the lovers' "union," which certainly "is a self-limitation," is nevertheless the relation wherein "they attain their sub-

stantial self-consciousness" and thus "is in fact their liberation" (§162). The clue, of course, is the free consent from which true love arises.

If love is to truly arise from free consent, then the individuals who so consent must in principle be able to abstract themselves from the immediate, pre-given determinations (e.g., sentiment, habit, desire, economics, social pressure, etc.) that un-freely lead us into, or prevent us from seeking, union with others. As such, loving marriage (as opposed, as we shall see, to non-loving variants) implies a freedom essentially subtracted from the social and natural determinations which involuntarily determine our relations. It is just this freedom that Hegel invokes as the ground of all ethical institutions at the start of the *Philosophy of Right*. For Hegel, the "basis of right is the realm of *spirit* in general and its precise location and point of departure is the will [which] is *free*, so that freedom constitutes its substance and destiny" (§4). The will, however, is only free in so far as it possesses "the element of *pure indeterminacy* or the 'I's pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content, whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires and drives, or given and determined in some other way is dissolved" (§5). That is, willing subjects can only freely consent to social relations—in other words, social institutions can only be ethical—if the will necessarily and always already contains the "limitless infinity of *absolute abstraction* or *universality*" distinct from them (§5). Institutions of right presuppose subjects who are in part radically subtracted from all particular determinations, whether social or natural, and thus whose essence defies strict empirical verification.¹³ In one sense, then, love, for Hegel, rests on a truth as austere, coldly indifferent to individual desire or interest, and absolutely subtracted from situational finitude as Badiou's eventual encounter.

Hegel recognizes, however, that determining love, or any actualization of subjectivity, solely through its ground in austere subtraction, that is turning this "freedom of the void [. . .] to actuality," would have catastrophic consequences, not only for social structures, but for the individuals who seek to actualize it (§5R). Since abstract freedom evacuates *every* determinate content and relation as external to its purity, then "[o]nly in destroying something" can this willing void "have a feeling of its own existence" (§5R). This, of course, is reminiscent of Badiou's fusional one in its drive towards death; however, even in Badiou's own account, since the encounter radically cuts individuals from their previously given world, all mere "individuals" who are in any way determined by contents that pre-exist the grasping of subtractive truth must be "regarded as suspect" (§5R), possible renegades whose disaster lies only in not militantly maintaining fidelity to an unjustified nomination, rather than in any suffering or destruction that they might either endure or impose on others. This is why, for Badiou, everything down to the sexed body of the individual must be fundamentally re-created anew, for lovers live in a world radically broken in two by an event. By contrast, while Hegel

grounds love in a truth subtracted from corporeal finitude, he nevertheless recognizes that, if love is to have any positive content for, and effect upon, individuals, subtraction alone is insufficient for determining the trajectory of its actualization. Rather, the freedom upon which love rests must equally presuppose the will's "*differentiation, determination, and the positing of a determinacy as a content and object*" (§6). While grounded in a freedom totally subtracted from all particular contents, this free will is only willing if it operates through particular individuals, all of whom find themselves in social and natural situations, and it is somehow in this situation, as this individual, that I must actualize my universal essence. Love presupposes not only the freedom *from* given natural and social determinations, but also the freedom *to* consent to particular determinations, at least in so far as they do not externally determine the will. As such, the subjective will that grounds institutions of right is a dialectical relation between universality and particularity, abstraction and concreteness, infinity and finitude, subjectivity and individuality, rather than a forcing of contingency onto determinacy as though it were necessary. Any such institution, then, actualizes a free "will [which] is the unity of both these moments" (§7), infinite and universal subtraction united with the "moment of [. . .] *finitude or particularization*" (§6). How, then, is such a will specifically actualized in love? More specifically, why is such love best called *marriage*?

Hegel begins his account of marriage by critiquing two views of the institution's societal origin: the dutiful arrangement of a marriage by one's relatives and the romantic conception of a love peculiar to the couple alone. Each, in its own way, reflects something of the free will which grounds love as an ethical relationship, but in a one-sided way. On the former view, which is close to Badiou's version of the family, marriage is an institution to which all are necessarily "destined" due to social determinations of human interest (§162R). Here, "considerations of wealth, connections, [. . .] political ends," or other social and economic determiners impose partnership upon individuals, making it the duty of all to ensure, even if by pressure or coercion, that the "girl's only concern is to find a husband and the man's to find a wife" (§162, Zus.). Like Badiou, Hegel is opposed to this view of the family, and not simply because such arrangements are indifferent to the free consent of the couples (who, after all, might come to believe it is their desire, given social circumstances; indeed, he suggests that often, in such cases, "the decision to marry comes first and is followed by the inclination" later [§162R]). Rather, it is because the logic of arranged marriage, in effect, treats "marriage merely as a civil contract" through which real love is "debased to a contract entitling the parties concerned to use one another" (§161, Zus.) to achieve goals determined outside their relation. This utilitarian conception of the individuals who must marry, Hegel claims, almost inevitably results in "very harsh effects" for the individuals in question, for it

treats them as “means to other ends” and thus is indifferent to their well-being or actualization (§162, Zus.).

It is, thus, not surprising that in “modern times [. . .] the *state of being in love*, is regarded as the only important factor” in determining the ethicality of marriage (§162, Zus.). This *romantic* view correctly requires the completely free consent of the individuals involved; however, it falsely defines love as an aberration from human relations, and instead sees it as “resting solely upon *these* individuals” (§162R). Marriage, here, is wholly subsumed by love, which—in romantic love as much as in Badiou’s account—is grounded in the contingent encounter that awakens “the mutual inclination of the two persons, as *these* infinitely particularized individuals” (§162R) to commit to each other. What determines love here is not the benefits that can be contractually exchanged, but the unexchangeable contingency of a love peculiar to the lovers alone. As such, there can be no duty to fall in love, nor can anyone actively seek to find a lover. Rather, as in Badiou’s amorous encounter, “each must wait until his hour has struck [for] one can give one’s love only to a specific individual” who arrives by luck, chance, or fate (§162, Zus.). As such, this view credits the pre-loving individual with “a pervasive element of frostiness” which is only “brought into the heat of passion” or love through a “*total* contingency” (§162R). Where arranged marriage grounds love solely in the given determinations of socially pressured individuals, romantic marriage, by contrast, subtracts their love so deeply from the situation that it can only arise from an ineffable mystery special to a peculiar few.

If both views of marriage essentially get love wrong, in Hegel’s view, both¹⁴ get something right, as well. By making marriage a duty, manifested through a social institution, arranged marriage rightfully acknowledges the relation as an actualization of universal human essence. It correctly holds individuals to be unfulfilled by satisfying drive and desire alone, and posits determinate relations with others as the essential actualization of humanity. It fails, however, to ground that actualization in the free will that is truly essential to such subjects and thus which makes such institutions ethical, by subsuming the loving relation under determinations external to it. The modern romantic conception, by contrast, correctly identifies the consent of the lovers as the core of marriage, but essentially reduces marriage to the contingency of an event that uniquely brings two together. This may, as Badiou suggests, lead to a Wagnerian demise, but Badiou’s own account similarly separates love from the interests and value of human essence in general, making love an absolutely unjustified decision, rather than an essentially human relation. Moreover, the contingency view makes love a rarity inexplicable to those who have not experienced it (or, perhaps, even those who have not experienced this particular love) and thus arguably cuts off the majority of humanity from genuine subjective actualization. Thus, while social marriage opens love up to all, and as a duty, but without grounding it first and solely in free

consent, contingent marriage grounds love in free consent, but without opening it up to all, thus eliminating it as an ethical relation.

Hegel combines these two dominant traditions of marriage in his own account of love. As we know, he holds that genuine "marriage arises out of the *free surrender* by both" lovers of their previous, separated existences into a new relation (§168). That is, it is an individual with their own desirous, interested, habitual. "personality or immediately exclusive *individuality* which surrenders itself to this relationship," and thus the new, life-changing relation of love only obtains through "the mutual and *undivided* surrender of this personality" (§167). Because love transforms lovers from isolated bundles of interests into partners sharing in a life, it is akin to the transformative, novel experience claimed by the romantics and Badiou. However, as Hegel also claims, marriage is a genuine, rather than an arbitrary or capricious actualization of freedom only to the extent that it is ethical, that is that it imposes duties and limits on the participants. It is not enough to have undergone the experience of falling in love, nor does this experience pass through a series of socially unrecognizable points of transformation. Rather, "the *ethical* aspect of marriage consists in the consciousness of this union as a substantial end, and hence in love, trust, and the sharing of the whole of individual existence" (§163). One loves only when one holds that the "family is a *single person* and its members are its accidents" (§163R), as demonstrated by the specific form of life they build with their lover. Love is objectively grounded in the free consent of distinct, contingent individuals, but objectively actualized in the relationship of commitment and fidelity to each other to which they specifically consent.

This is perhaps best clarified by Hegel's account of the marriage vow. In agreement with Badiou, Hegel argues that declaration of marriage "by means of the *sign*—i.e., by means of language as the most spiritual existence of the spiritual"—actually founds the trajectory of love (§164). However, what is declared in the vow is not a fidelity to the event-encounter or "subjective origin" which produced the "*particular inclination* of the two persons who enter this relationship" (§162); nor is it fidelity to the religious or economic mores of a society external to the love. Rather, what is avowed is the lovers' "consent to the ethical bond of marriage" itself (§164). Of course, this implies that a precise bond or relation definable as marriage can be specified. This relation, moreover, must cohere with free consent as the ground of marriage; that is, it must proceed from freedom itself. As such, it presupposes, as we suggested above, that such a relation can be defended as an emancipatory self-limitation. What, then, does the relation of marriage consists in, and why is this apparently external limitation in fact subjective liberation?

We know that marriage, for Hegel, is only genuinely free if it is abstracted from all determinations that coerce individuals into it. As such, marriage cannot consist in fulfilling a social function of any kind. While,

as he notes, child-rearing most often accompanies marriage, so do many other determinations external to the couple (home-owning, shared bank accounts, wills, etc.) and none are essential for terming a marriage loving. As such, “no one [externally determinate] aspect on its own constitutes [marriage’s] ethical character [thus] one or another aspect of its existence may be absent, without prejudice to the essence of marriage” (§164R). Marriage is not essentially defined by any “accidental consequence belonging to the external existence of the ethical bond, which may even consist exclusively in mutual love and support” (§164), rather than producing children or even being sexual.¹⁵ Marriage serves no function external to itself as the extension of the lovers’ free consent to form one out of two and nothing more, and yet must be a self-imposed limitation or duty which objectifies their love.

As such, “[m]arriage is essentially *monogamy*” (§167, Hegel’s emphasis). Marriage is nothing more than the surrendering of one’s own pre-loving individuality into determinate union with another, and this is only accomplished by newly defining one’s body in relation to that of another, as exclusively bonded with it. Thus, marriage rests not in the attraction, the declaration, the ceremony, or any particular determination, although these all may or do feature in building a life with another. Rather, it consists in the relation, rather than the mere thought or self-justified experience, of fidelity, and specifically fidelity to a lived bond with the individuality of the other, rather than to the encounter or declaration that precedes the love. In fact—as Hegel hints in the revealing phrase, “Marriage, and essentially monogamy, is one of the absolute principles on which the ethical life of a community is based” (§167)—marriage or the family is simply his name for loving monogamy, independent of all external factors.

Having specified monogamy as the specific relation that defines love, we are left only with the question of why monogamy is liberating. Why does loving monogamy actualize the free will in a way that, for example, serial romantic love does not? Recall that, for Hegel, the freedom actualized via consent to monogamy is radically subtracted from corporeal embodiment. This includes, of course, such forces of external coercion as sexual drive. Nevertheless, this subtracted freedom must be actualized through embodied individuals, who ineradicably possess such desire with which their love is inevitably mixed, that is marriage, “as the *immediate ethical relationship*, contains [. . .] the moment of *natural vitality*” (§161). It is free individuals who love, not abstract thoughts, and as such, genuine love is always threatened by confusion with mere lust, and the biological and social pressures that spring from it. Monogamy is, for Hegel, an ethical channelling through which the natural, merely given, and socially celebrated “sensuous moment which pertains to natural life is thereby put into its ethical relation [*Verhältnis*]” (§164, trans. modified), thus allowing individuals to satisfy merely given drives while neverthe-

less emerging “from [their] naturalness and subjectivity to concentrate on the thought of the [ethically] substantial” (§164R). We always, qua embodied, are beset by desire and drive, as well as habit and other determining factors; love does not totally reshape our bodies anew, but is a relation between infinitely free agents who are also corporeally finite. However, by channelling such external factors into a determinate, lived relation explicitly grounded in subjective, free declarations of consent, we can, to an extent, liberate ourselves from their coercive influence. Sexual desire, for example, cannot be eliminated; however, when its consummation is limited to monogamous coupling, this both raises us out of desirous relations with others, or the “contingency of the passions and of particular transient caprice” (§163) (which, e.g., may compel us to treat others as mere sexual objects, thus dehumanizing them), while simultaneously valorizing sexual satisfaction as an aspect of full humanity, rather than condemning those who raise themselves out of mere desire to the “monastic attitude which defines the moment of natural life as utterly *negative*” (§163R) (which, e.g., compels us to treat our pre-loving selves as the enemy). Thus, justifications for marriage that ground it “merely in the natural sexual drive” or other “external reasons for monogamy [. . .] derived [. . .] from the physical relation between numbers of men and women” like the survival of the species, and so on “are based on the common notion of a state of nature and of the naturalness of right, and [thus] on the absence of the concept of rationality and freedom” (§168R). Procreation, social stability, property relations, and sexual release, after all, can all easily be (and have historically largely been) achieved without the invocation of love. It is only monogamous love, an extremely recent and specifically human institution,¹⁶ which allows couples to live a form of ineradicably embodied and desirous life which nevertheless testifies to a freedom radically distinct from them, in and through the specific and determinate relation that obtains between the lovers. That is, through monogamy, the “*union* of the natural sexes” formerly defined by desire, drive, and/or social pressure alone “is transformed into a *spiritual* union, into self-conscious love” (§161).

For this reason, Hegel, like Badiou, argues that a transformation of the sexed body takes place, albeit a more limited one, wherein the “*natural* determinacy of the two sexes acquires an *intellectual* and *ethical* significance” (§165). According to Hegel, the unity of monogamy “divides itself up in order that its vitality may thereby achieve a concrete unity” (§165), producing dialectically related sex positions that he likewise calls *man* and *woman*, and, in fairness, his account of them is even more heteronormative and sexist than Badiou’s. Moreover, unlike Badiou, Hegel certainly intends these positions to map on to the natural division of the sexes. Since Hegel, in addition, offers even less justification for these specific positions than Badiou does for adopting Lacan’s, it must be ad-

mitted that Hegel's sex positions are in fact the more reactionary, essentially justifying patriarchal categories.

However, what chiefly distinguishes the two conceptions is that, for Badiou, such sexed positions are absolutely *essential* in that love is not, and must forever ward off the temptation to become, a relationship. Without such distinct, specifically sexed positions, love is threatened by a desirous body that can collapse the scene of Two into a merely familial one, and thus a sexed distinction *must* obtain within the bodies, regardless of their pre-loving "natural" difference. By contrast, the differentiation of the Hegelian couple into sex roles is only justified to the extent that they aid in producing and maintaining the concrete unity forged by a love whose ground is not nature, but freedom. As such, if such roles fail to obtain in particular couples, or are perhaps even eliminated socially over time through the collective willful acts of loving partners who seek a more equitable or fluid sharing of roles, then *nothing essential* in marriage is affected. If monogamy is aided by sex roles, then they are justified; but if they hinder it, or are external to it for some or most couples, then they should simply be relegated to the external determinations love must ignore. Thus, while for Badiou some version of sex roles is essential to, even defining of, love, on Hegel's account such a division is only justified if it enduringly aids in producing a relation of loving support, and, as such, it can be removed if it ceases, in general or in particular cases, to solidify a monogamous bond.

Since Hegel's lovers are transformed into new, emancipated subjects by the process of loving, we should ask, as we did of Badiou, what of couples who fall out of love? Since marriage is grounded in free consent, Hegel, unlike Badiou, readily accepts the permissibility of the willed ending of love marriage, or divorce, in cases where the love has been lost. Love is fidelity to a monogamous, supportive relationship, not subjection to an eternal truth, and thus if one or both of the partners cease living in a manner which sustains this unity (e.g., through infidelity, abuse, mental cruelty, indifference, etc.), then divorce is permitted, or in fact encouraged, by the structure of love itself, such that a new loving union can be found elsewhere. That is, just "as there can be no compulsion to marry" as this would violate the free will which grounds it as an ethical institution, "so also can there be no [. . .] bond which could keep the partners together once their dispositions and actions have become antagonistic and hostile" (§176). Of course, to avoid the "loving Don Juan" problem we identified above in Badiou, Hegel notes that marriage must weather the storm against, for example, "the mere opinion that a hostile disposition is present, [or] against the contingency of merely transient moods" (§176). Loving monogamy is difficult for individuals beset by desirous and social pressures, and one can expect a certain amount of Badiou's limping march over time. Thus, it is only under conditions of "total estrangement" that a marriage may be ethically broken, as this signifies

that the love has been lost, as opposed to merely tested (§176). But what is key is that marriage, for Hegel, only retains its ethicality in so far as the decision once made is, in a sense, *revocable* given the trajectory of the relation that forms in its wake. While it remains the duty of all free beings to forge and work to sustain such a relation, there can be so such compulsion to do so with any contingent partner, in a relation of any contingent kind. Since marriage is only loving if it is the monogamous and supportive sharing of a life, should these factors cease to obtain in a relationship, it ceases to be a real marriage, and thus can be willfully, and ethically, abandoned.

In sum: love is a relationship, not a truth procedure. Objectively grounded in a freedom subtracted from merely given determinations of society and nature, but which is also universal and essential to humanity as a whole, love is an ethical duty, rather than a miraculous or personal contingency. It is not opposed to corporeal individuality, but incorporates it into an ethical institution which neither valorizes nor condemns our naturally given desires or acquired habits; rather, it channels them into an essentially ethical and emancipatory relation. It is certainly a relation of fidelity, but fidelity to another free but embodied being, rather than to an event, an encounter, or to subtractive freedom itself. As such, love exists in a relation of supportive monogamy, rather than in the thoughts of either partner singly, and thus is more accurately called marriage, or the family. Because love is a liberating relation, it is the duty of all to seek, and enter into, loving relations with another, but none can be forced to accept the consequences of such consent indefinitely and regardless of the shared life which develops. Love is neither to be entered into, nor exited, lightly, but, grounded in free choice, can be abandoned if it is no longer emancipatory but repressive. Such an entrance or exit, finally, can be and is justified by the extent to which the lovers actually build a life of loving, monogamous support.

CONCLUSION

There are, of course, those who will suggest I have been unfair, here. Throughout, I have stressed the role of the universally human in Hegel's conception of marriage, while ignoring the multiple references to generic humanity in Badiou's account of love. I will close, therefore, by briefly examining the link between love's new subjectivity and humanity in general, or the distinct forms of humanism defended by the two thinkers.

It is certainly true that "*There is only one humanity*" is the final thesis of Badiou's theory of love; this, however, is immediately followed by the question, "What does 'humanity' signify in a non-humanist sense?" (C 184). As the discussion above indicates, there can be no "objective predicative trait" that defines such humanity (C 184).¹⁷ Such a trait, after all,

would attribute humanity to mere individuals, not yet subject to the truth that contingently befalls them. Humanity, in this humanist sense, would be implicitly possessed by all, and thus unrelated to the experience of events. If any objective trait is postulated for humanity—be it subtractive and infinite, as in Hegel's free essence, or corporeal and finite, as in accounts of human nature—this would make humanity "into something ideal or empirical, and in any case inappropriate" for a subject born of an evental truth (C 184). Thus, Badiou rejects any account of humanity not grounded in the radical separation between before and after, old and new, individual and subject, upon which his entire account of the event rests. In what sense, then, can he speak, with justification of one humanity?

Events cut subjects off from their previous individuality precisely because their radical contingency, inexplicability, and uncertainty eliminate all distinctions present within humanity from those who declare fidelity to them. Events are not open exclusively to the competent, the rational, the questing, but essentially evade such determinate relations and positions at their very core. Since an event like the amorous encounter, while specific to the couple who love, is nevertheless "subtracted from every position" and, for Badiou, "is, moreover, the only thing that is" so subtracted, an evental "truth shall be said to be generic" (C 185). Thus, because the truth of an event is not related in any way to the merely existent individuals who contingently experience it, it in fact demands the construction of new, un-related subjects constituted solely by fidelity to it. An event's truth is sustained only insofar as its truth is forced into their situation, but as such, the process of this forcing creates a new, "anti-human humanism" in s/he who "sustains the infinite singularity of truths" (C 184). Only subjects are fully human because they radically oppose the *merely* human in their militant fidelity to a subtracted truth. Thus, in Badiou's terms, generic humanity means "that which provides support to the generic or truth procedures" (C 184) in the wake of an event. Thus, while Badiou, like Hegel, avows a certain generic humanity, this reflects no common human essence; rather, it simply names the equal possibility of all human individuals to be subject to a truth unrelated to any specific individual, which arises contingently in, but as unrelated to, their situation, and which remains indifferent to their subsequent support, but nevertheless requires it.¹⁸

As should be clear, Hegel, while equally affirming a subtractive ground for his own "humanity function," nevertheless demands that this ground be implicitly possessed by humanity as a whole, across time. The human cannot be opposed to the corporeal particularity of individuals but, qua universal, must nevertheless be distinct from it. In isolating the Idea of the free will, Hegel seeks to demonstrate that subtraction and concretion are neither opposed, nor hierarchically ordered, but dialectically unified in particular, determinable relations which are both liveable

by mere individuals, but nevertheless actualize our free humanity. Neither specific to corporeal individuals, nor radically divorced from their embodiment, freedom is not something humans are subject to in the wake of an event and only through militant fidelity, but that which essentially and ineradicably differentiates them as a species from all merely determined entities. Thus, humanity is neither born anew in the wake of an event, nor a determinate nature that remains static over time; rather, it has "an altogether different destiny from that of merely natural objects [. . .] namely, a real capacity for change, and that for the better—an impulse of perfectibility."¹⁹ This humanity, then, is only truly actualized when individuals arise to freer subjectivity, that is, when they willfully create and sustain relations that ethically channel their merely natural drives and received social habits into mutually liberating institutional forms. An institution of "[r]ight is any existence in general which is the *existence* of the *free will*. Right is therefore in general freedom, as Idea" (§29). As such, the emergence of actualized humanity or subjectivity from mere individuality is always already available to all human subjects, at least in some form, and waits upon nothing more than the collective, willed effort of individuals to unite to transform received relations into emancipatory, self-determined ones.

Given that both Badiou and Hegel ground their theories of love and actualized subjectivity in an element subtracted from the merely given resources of their situation, there can perhaps be no firm answer as to who is "correct." In a sense, what we are presented with through this debate on the nature of love is a stark divide between two accounts of the transformation of mere individuals into genuinely human subjects: one whose chief enemy is the individual who experiences this transformation and which thus demands an evacuation of all merely human relations as its price, and another which consists in ethically channelling, without eliminating, the corporeal individual into sustained and emancipatory relations with others. Perhaps more strikingly, one humanism divides the species into pre-human and post-evental groups, the latter only truly actualized as such when they force an apparently illegal and potentially cruel truth upon the world peopled by others who may not share belief in it, while the other assumes an unwavering continuity and commonality of perfectible humanity across history, but whose essence is better actualized by increasing the emancipatory effect of its institutional relations on all of the subjects that fill them. A humanism which radically separates humanity from its past through a militant few in thrall to a truth unconnected to its history versus one which sees humanity as a whole continuously perfecting itself by building on and continuing the institutional gains of their predecessors. Fidelity to an unjustified event or fidelity to new relations forged with other subjects; fidelity by a collective defined by absolute disjunction or sustained through commonly willed effort. As such, as with all philosophies which deny strict confirmation, the perti-

nent questions is perhaps not: which is right? Rather, we might simply ask: which conception is more liberating for the one humanity?

NOTES

1. Alain Badiou, with Nicholas Truong, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (New York: The New Press, 2012), 85. Hereafter cited parenthetically in text as PL.

2. Alain Badiou, with Fabien Tarby, *Philosophy and the Event*, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 52. Hereafter cited as PE.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §162. Hereafter cited by numbered paragraph. Hegel's own remarks will be denoted by R, while the lecture notes collected by his students (*Zusätze*) will be marked Zus.

4. Alain Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2008), 48. Hereafter cited as MS.

5. Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 187.

6. *Ibid.*, 129.

7. Alain Badiou, "The Scene of Two," trans. Barbara P. Faulks, *Lacanian Ink*, no. 21 (2003), 42–55 (52).

8. Hallward, 187. But, for an interesting account of the divergences between Badiou's and Lacan's accounts of love, see Sigi Jöttkandt, "Love," in A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens, eds., *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts* (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 73–81.

9. Hallward, 129.

10. Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (New York: Verso Books, 2001), 47. For a detailed discussion of the differences between these maxims, see Eleanor Kaufman, "Why the Family Is Beautiful (Lacan Against Badiou)," *Diacritics*, Vol. 32, No. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 2002), 135–151.

11. See, for example, the perplexing discussion of 'women' in Alain Badiou, *Plato's Republic: A Dialogue in 16 Chapters*, trans. Susan Spitzer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 148–161.

12. I draw, to an extent, here on a more extensive treatment of love, marriage and their relation to human freedom I previously developed in "'Free Love': A Hegelian Defense of Same-Sex Marriage Rights," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XLVII:1 (Spring 2009), 69–89. My reading of these pages, admittedly, is somewhat heterodox, and thus cuts against some more standard commentaries. Given the limited space, here, and the fact that "Free Love" offers an extensive response to the secondary literature, I refer to the reader to this text for answers to various "Hegelian" challenges for my reading.

13. Of course, Hegel does offer a deduction of free thought and will from embodied finitude in the third volume of the *Encyclopedia* (§44–482). In the *Philosophy of Right*, however, the free will is treated axiomatically as the ground of any consideration of right, and, as such, does not necessarily depend upon the previous accounts for its justification. Freedom is just what is required for any institution to be one of genuine right, rather than one of tradition, stability, or convenience. For a more extensive discussion of the free will in Hegel, see my "Siding with Freedom: Towards a Prescriptive Hegelianism," *Critical Horizons*, 12:1 (2011), 49–69, and for an account of its concrete political consequences, see my "'I Am We': The Dialectics of Political Will in Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party," *Theory and Event*, 17:4 (2014).

14. Albeit contrary to Hegel's account of modernity, cf. §162.

15. Of course, in §173, Hegel does claim that "the unity of marriage [. . .] becomes in the children an existence which has being for itself." However, he also suggests much the same for the clearly external determination of property, in which alone, he claims, does the couple's unified "personality have its existence" (§169). Moreover, his focus

in his discussion of children is less the conjugal duty to produce them (actually never cited) than on the loving support owed all children by virtue of being born free. As such, there is no direct relation between marriage and children, although mutual responsibilities between parents and children can be specified. Again, see my "Free Love" for more extensive discussion.

16. There are of course monogamous animals, but their coupling is clearly not grounded in free consent or love, but drive. Humans have also always in general coupled in an institution called marriage, but rarely actually monogamously or with anything resembling love or free choice as founding the relation. It is loving monogamy as defining of marriage which marks the unique advance, here, and thus Hegel's account should not be conflated with any defence of "traditional marriage" as the natural, religious, political, etc., foundation of the social order. To the contrary, it is the very unnatural, anti-traditional nature of love that makes it ethical.

17. Although, as Hallward notes, while Badiou "seeks to maintain a strictly eventual definition of the human," at times he is nevertheless "obliged to define thought" or another unique capacity like loving, artistically creating, and so on "almost as an anthropological attribute" (321).

18. My critique in this essay, of course, echoes that of Hallward, who counters Badiou's account of subjectivity as "accessible only once [an] individual has been subtracted from the regime of relations it has with other individuals" with more dialectical conception wherein "what matters is the conversion of oppressive relations into liberating ones" (322). It is thus surprising that he has been so resistant to incorporating Hegel's account of political will and institutions more thoroughly into his "dialectical Voluntarism." Compare his "The Will of the People: Notes Towards a Dialectical Voluntarism," *Radical Philosophy*, 155 (2009), 17–29, with his comments on Hegel, for example, in *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 3, and *Out of This World: Gilles Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

19. Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956): Humanity (54). For discussion of the increased perfection of this essence historically through political will, see my "Hegel, Edward Sanders and Emancipatory History," *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History and the Philosophy of History*, 42:1 (2013), 27–52, and "'Liberation Theology: Hegel on Why Philosophy Takes Sides in Religious Conflict," *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, 17:2 (Fall 2013), 141–157.

EIGHT

Fidelity to the Political Event: Hegel, Badiou, and the Return to the Same

Antonio Calcagno

Ancient political philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero argued that the flourishing or good of the state depended largely on the unity of its members. Each philosopher explains how to fortify the unity that a polis or republic needs to thrive; for example, Aristotle names both justice and friendship (*philia*) as vital, whereas Cicero appeals to religion and law. Recent Anglo-American political philosophy, especially social ontology, has focused on the question of the nature of the social bonds that help (Western Liberal) states achieve unity. Raimo Tuomela's monumental work on social ontology and group action eminently represents the view that collectivities form because of members' collective epistemic affirmation of their intentions to belong to a group and because members hold in common certain ethical stances justified by authoritative reasons.¹ Privileged in Tuomela's and other accounts, for example, Margaret Gilbert's² work, is the rational will informed by recent analytical understandings of the Liberal tradition of politics.

Hegel understood unity, marked by the interplay of identity and difference, as a key moment in the unfolding of freedom in the state. He argues in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*³ that complex and developed political realities, for example, the state, require larger, more encompassing unities of individuals as well as more complex institutions in order to thrive. Rather than employ the term "unity" or "identity," Badiou will speak of sets filled with multiple elements, all of which can be said to *adhere*, *belong*, or even be external to another set. An event causes elements of a situation to gather to form a new set of existence, but the event

itself is not reducible to the elements of the set that it gives rise to. Badiou's ultra-one of the event is neither identitarian nor a unity: it is not a Platonic One that is beyond being. Hegel looms large in Badiou's thought, but not as one to be followed; rather, Hegel is seen as a philosopher that is to be explicitly left aside, as Frank Ruda reminds us in this collection. Though both philosophers express the necessity of togetherness as being vital for all politics and events, they diverge as to how this happens. This essay assesses their models of political togetherness. Given Hegel's analysis of identity and difference in the life of the state, I argue that the force and fidelity that Badiou views as belonging to the inherent structure of politics are undermined by his reluctance to admit identity (unity) as a genuine political reality. Furthermore, the placing of history and nature within the realm of the evental, something Hegel does not do, weakens both the adherence and belonging that bind elements to the sets that form political events: adherence and belonging end up lacking the force that Badiou says they have. Hegel shows us how genuine moments of political identity exist, but they need to be set within the category of becoming rather than in the event structure of being.

The Hegelian discussion of politics is as complicated as it is far-reaching. I cannot undertake a whole discussion of Hegel's political philosophy within the limits of this essay; rather, I focus here on the treatment of unity within a key moment of the life of the state, namely, the discussion of sovereignty. I examine this moment in Hegel's philosophy because we have here a strong claim about the life of the state and how it actualizes both unity and difference in order to be what it is. I then focus on Badiou's treatment of the event that gives rise to politics.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Before we can proceed to investigate both Badiou's and Hegel's positions, we need to discuss briefly the status of the state in both thinkers' political philosophies. For Hegel, the state is an important moment in the development of the life of spirit. It is not spirit's ultimate end, but it is one of its later achievements. He views the state as vital for the unfolding of reason but also for the larger sense of the individual as taken up in the life of the state. Badiou, by contrast, identifies the state (*l'État*) as a factor that helps bring about political events, but it does so in a negative way. The state is viewed as a unified, homogenous, identitarian whole that pressures and oppresses. The state, however, is not a whole unto itself.⁴ Political events, for example, the French Revolution, come to be, in part, because they push back against state pressure, ultimately overthrowing the rule of the unified state.⁵ On one hand, Badiou claims that state pressure is necessary for political events to unfold, yet, on the other hand, the state is something that must be overcome and it is not the locus of politi-

cal events. To further complicate matters, when political events do happen and when we retrospectively apprehend them, new state configurations can be viewed as being part of political events, although they may not exert the same force as their earlier incarnations. For example, after the Russian Revolution or May '68, all examples of political events for Badiou, both the Russian and French states still exist, albeit in different forms. Rather than a pressuring, oppositional force, the newly configured states become elements or members of the new sets that form the events named French Revolution and May '68. A trace of the old state perdures, albeit in a radically transformed way. Fidelity, in relation to the newly configured state elements of the event, becomes understood as being faithful or loyal to, even loving or trusting, the event and all the changes it has introduced.

For Hegel and Badiou, the state is an important moment in the development of politics. Both philosophers see the state as being taken up in a greater process, either in the life of spirit or in the event. Both thinkers disagree, however, over the precise role and definition of the state. Another important difference emerges which is important for our discussion here: unity/togetherness and multiplicity play significant roles in the life of the state, and how they are configured by both philosophers will serve as the base for my arguments here.

HEGEL'S VIEW OF POLITICAL UNITY

Hegel's treatment of the state arises from his analysis of civil society and corporations, where ethical life gives birth to concrete customs. He notes:

The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea—the ethical spirit as substantial will, manifest and clear to itself, which thinks and knows itself and implements what it knows in so far as it knows it. It has its immediate existence in custom and its mediate existence in the self-consciousness of the individual, in the individual's knowledge and activity, just as self-consciousness, by virtue of its disposition, has its substantial freedom in the state as its essence, its end, and the product of its activity. (PR §257)

As Hegel moves from smaller social realities to more complex and encompassing ones like the state, he accounts for the specific nature of the social bonds that keep these new and larger historical realities together. He begins his analysis by arguing that the state needs to be more than a social contract, understood in the Rousseauian sense, for the contract is simply the expression of the general will, which, for Hegel, lacks rational necessity. The general will is an assembly of individuals who tacitly agree to alienate their individual freedom to form a collective unity that serves to protect individual security, but the general agreement is not sufficiently rationally justified, for it cannot account for the whole essence of the

state: the complex reality of the state, understood as a social and corporate unity as well as a sovereign entity unto itself, far exceeds what the general will purports to do as an account of the foundation of the state. The general will accounts simply for a consensus that forms a people that participate in a contract, but the state is more than just a contract among citizens: it has history, institutions, culture, ethics, an economy, and art, all of which are part and parcel of the state. In short, for Hegel, the state as grounded in Rousseau's general will of the people is simply abstract. Furthermore, rejecting thinkers like Hobbes and Machiavelli, Hegel does not believe that the state is kept together simply by fear. He maintains that what most likely keeps the social reality of the state together is people's expectation or habits of order. "Representational thought often imagines that the state is held together by force; but what holds it together is simply the basic sense of order, which everyone possesses" (PR §268).

So what makes the state a state for Hegel? In brief, it is a new substantial unified whole. Hegel observes in section 276 of *Philosophy of Right*, "The basic determination of the political state is the substantial unity or ideality of its moments, (a) In this unity, the particular powers and functions of the state are both dissolved and preserved. But they are preserved only in the sense that they are justified not as independent entities, but only in such a way and to such an extent as is determined by the Idea of the whole; their source is the latter's authority and they are its fluid members, just as it is their simple self" (PR §276). Hegel views the state as a new kind of whole or social unity marked by a distinct form of consciousness, subjectivity, practices, social organization, and history: the state has distinct functions and powers, but they are not seen as lying over and against the individual members of the state; rather, these functions and powers are seen as "dissolved and preserved," that is, they are viewed as both identical and different than various individual members of the state. Hegel notes, "The particular functions and activities of the state belong to it as its own essential moments, and the individuals who perform and implement them are associated with them not by virtue of their immediate personalities, but only by virtue of their universal and objective qualities. Consequently, the link between these functions and particular personalities as such is external and contingent in character. For this reason, the functions and powers of the state cannot be private property" (PR §277).

The state, understood as a unified whole of its own constitutive moments, consists of a unity between various individual state members. The unity Hegel speaks of here is both a real unity, that is, an identity, and a differentiated whole.⁶ The state is not a thing in itself that exists outside the life of its members, nor is it reducible to the life of its individual members. The state's own freedom and autonomy, what Hegel calls the state's sovereignty, consists in the particular relations of unity and difference between members of a state: "The above two determinations—i.e.,

that the particular functions and powers of the state are not self-sufficient and fixed, either on their own account or in the particular will of individuals, but are ultimately rooted in the unity of the state as their simple self—constitute the sovereignty of the state” (PR §278). The foregoing notion of sovereignty is called internal sovereignty. Hegel distinguishes between internal and external sovereignty. The former refers to the sovereignty (i.e., power to auto-legislate and self-rule) that lies within the very inherent structure of the state, whereas the latter refers to the state’s capacity to remain sovereign from outside threats or attacks, as is largely the case with Aristotle’s notion of *autarkia*.

Though the state is a sovereign reality unto itself, it still requires a head. We know that Hegel championed constitutional monarchy: he sees the life of the state as being further developed when it has a personality, that is, when there is a constitutional monarch that embodies the spirit of the state. “The personality of the state has actuality only as the person, as the monarch. Personality expresses the concept as such, whereas the person also embodies the actuality of the concept, and only when it is determined in this way [i.e., as a person] is the concept Idea or truth” (PR §279). The sovereign has the right to pardon criminal offences and also has the right to subsume particulars under his universal authority. The sovereign can appoint particular executive members, always loyal to the sovereign, to carry out certain functions in the name of the sovereign (PR §279). The executive includes the judiciary and the police. “The execution and application of the sovereign’s decisions, and in general the continued implementation and upholding of earlier decisions, existing laws, institutions, and arrangements to promote common ends, and so on, are distinct from the decisions themselves” (PR §287). There is also a third moment that belongs to the power of the sovereign, namely, what Hegel calls “the universal in and for itself” (PR §285). Here, he refers specifically to the subjective conscience of the monarch and the objective constitution and laws as a whole. The sovereign monarch must in good conscience uphold the universality of the laws and the constitution, and he can employ his conscience, which is aimed at universal truth, in order to uphold the universal laws and constitution.⁷

The preceding brief presentation of inner sovereignty is an important, constitutive moment of Hegel’s theory of the state. For our purposes, here, I would like to offer a few reflections on the relationship between unity/identity and difference that Hegel views as vital for political life. Whether we discuss Hegel’s notion of the state or Badiou’s theory of the political event, we need to discuss how states and events hold themselves together. Hegel employs history, freedom, and reason,⁸ whereas Badiou uses retrospective apprehension and set theory to justify the possibility of political events. If we read Hegel closely, we must view his understanding of unity as a process, a becoming. In this way, he, like Badiou, avoids a kind of Neo-Platonic view of the fixed One. Hegelian unity, at least how

it unfolds in and through the dialectic of history,⁹ is set within three moments that continuously flow into one another, until they reach the ultimate end, which for some interpreters could be understood as consciousness becoming fully conscious of itself or consciousness being identical with itself. First, there is a unity or an identity, which simultaneously contains in itself its own differentiation. Second, this differentiation causes a negation of the identity, which ultimately leads to, third, the creation of a new being, which is once again an identity that contains its own difference. All three moments are realized in the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. For example, the state is a unity or identity. It arises as something new but it still derives from ethical society, in particular, from corporations (understood as professional associations and not as the legal corporate entities of present-day business) that need larger juridical and political structures in order to continue to thrive. Lest we lapse into abstraction, the aforementioned moments are set within an historical process, and Hegel's description of the state can be read as his own view of what the Prussian state had become and where it was headed. Philosophers are divided as to whether Hegel's state ever was achieved in the way he describes. Also, his descriptions, especially around civil society, helped shape the split between left and right Hegelians.

As we saw above, when we examine the social relations that make up the state, we see that the monarch and the executive are both the state, but the state also extends beyond the individual sovereign and executive members of the state. Hegel posits real unity and real difference, but he sees them as being in movement, as becoming: the state has an inner life, an inner sovereignty. The state is internalized and externalized in its members: sovereign monarch, executive members, judiciary, and individual members. The state can be seen as internalizing itself in the life of its citizens: citizens become aware that their individual freedom is no longer an abstract right, but is dependent upon, recognized, and situated within a larger social reality. The state externalizes itself in world history and state conflict. Badiou claims that the one of identity is impossible because of the sheer multiplicity of realities that constitute existence. He prefers the ultra-one that arises from the relations of real elements in a set. He does not accept the force of Hegelian teleology as driving the structure of reality to take the shape it does. For Hegel, life moves because of the force of reason and the dialectic of history, that is, the movement of freedom and God. Badiou sees movement as made by the decision or intervention of the subject. One of the key differences between the two thinkers lies in their respective discussions about the necessity and force of a unity or identity. More will be said about this later, but first we need to unpack certain key claims made by Badiou about political events.

BADIOU AND THE TOGETHERNESS OF POLITICAL EVENTS

Throughout his work, Badiou often complains that what is commonly understood as politics is simply politicking, management, and bureaucracy.¹⁰ Electioneering, political campaigns, and votes in parliaments are not political, for Badiou. All of these activities draw from and work within a political framework that has been established by key political events. Events and their subjects establish a political regime or rule, for example, contemporary conceptions of Western democracy are deeply informed by events like the French and Russian Revolutions along with May '68; these events, in turn, permit the kind of politicking, electioneering, and bureaucratic management of the system that we typically see as democratic politics. In short, for Badiou, what we call politics is simply an extension of what was established by some earlier monumental event. He says that Western politics is largely "sutured"¹¹ to the aforementioned political events, which condition our sensibility and practice of contemporary politics.

So, what is an event? An event is the deliberate, willed, and subjective intervention on the part of an individual or group of individuals that results in a massive shift of being: the event produces a new regime of being. For Badiou, there are four sites of events that bring about such large paradigm shifts: mathematics/science, politics, love, and art/poetry.¹² Though all events share a similar structure, the four evental regimes discussed above also have unique traits, for example, poetry has language and ideas as its primary content, whereas love concentrates on intimate human relationships. For the purposes of this essay, I will concentrate on political events. The political event arises when three specific conditions have been met (AM 156–160): 1) the state has to exert incredible pressure on a situation in order to preserve a certain *status quo*—one can measure the power of the state in relation to the force of the event; 2) political events are collective; 3) political events bring about the destruction of an old form of politics and launch a new regime or form of politics. Here, we are not talking about a routine change of government or leadership; rather, we are talking about a new way of thinking and doing politics. Such changes for Badiou are understood as revolutionary. The conditions Badiou lays out for the becoming of a political event are concrete: events are not a *creatio ex nihilo*. They draw upon a situation that is being severely determined, pressured, or confined by a particular form of political rule. The reaction against such a pressured political order can be measured retrospectively by the force with which a new regime appears. Obviously, the paradigm Badiou employs for his reading of political events is informed by revolution, the modern revolutions of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. The greater the state oppression is, the greater the reaction. One can understand the intensity of the violence of the French or the American Revolutions, for example,

as a reaction in kind against the violence of the oppression of French and English absolutist monarchs. The collectivities that bring about political events create new forms of subjectivity that subjectivize individuals in a new form of self-understanding and being.

An example of a political event is the French Revolution. The pressure of the aristocrats and the king, who inherited and embodied a view of monarchy as absolute and identitarian (the monarch is the state), on their subjects took the form of neglect and exploitation. The people, led by the likes of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and other revolutionaries, acted in unison to overthrow the king, and they established a new political order, which would make monarchy in its old absolutist form an impossibility, that is, an absolutist monarchy could no longer arise in the same way as a legitimate form of political rule. The citizens would now rule in a new republic, which was more inclusive and less autocratic, at least, this was the initial spirit of the Revolution. We know, however, that as it began to unfold the Terror severely compromised the Revolution's original goals.

In order for an event like the French Revolution to occur, it requires both materiality and a historical situation:¹³ events gather people and things in a material, historical situation in order to regroup them in a deeply subjectivating fashion. The situation or evental site is described by Badiou as "foundational" (EE 195). The evental site is pre-event and consists of a multiplicity that is empty (*vide*) of any individualizing or singularizing force. An event, however, is always located at a point of a situation, that is, it concerns a multiple present in a situation (EE 199). The event ruptures a situation and becomes a singular site within a historical situation (EE 200). Badiou calls the event of "site X a multiple that is composed of the parts of the situation and composed of its own, unique and singular parts" (EE 200).

The event of the French Revolution extends, for Badiou, from about 1789 to 1794. It generates a set of various identifying, describing, or naming elements, including the electors of the Estates-General, the peasants of the Great Terror, the sans-culottes of the cities, the personnel of the Convention, Jacobins, conscripted soldiers, the guillotine, effects of the tribunals, English spies, the theater, la Marseillaise, etc. An historian can include in the set "French Revolution" any number of facts that belong to this singular Revolution and not any other revolution. But the event is not reducible to the collection of facts or elements that belong to the set: these elements are very much part of the situation that is part of the event, but the event itself exceeds the "inventory" of elements (EE 201). The event of the French Revolution is an ultra-one, *ultra-un*, for it is an axial term in that it defines and subjectivates a particular consciousness of a time, always in relation to our own time—recall that we can only grasp events in retrospective apprehension (EE 201). Badiou remarks, "Concerning the French Revolution, understood as an event, one must say that it not only presents the infinite multiple of the sequence of facts

situated between 1789 and 1794, but it *also* presents itself as an immanent summary and as a unification of its own multiplicity" (EE 201, translation mine). What is unique about any event, including the French Revolution, is the particular subjectivation and temporization that happens: events produce their own singular subjects and times.¹⁴

The French Revolution produced a new kind of subject and marked a new kind of time. In the case of the former, we have the beginning of the revolutionary subject, who wishes to found a collective political order where all are equal, despite class, birth, or rank. Examples of the *new revolutionary subjectivity* include Rousseau, Saint-Just, and Robespierre. The subject emerges through particular interventions, and the event subjectivates or gives a name to the kind of subject that emerges through the event. In terms of the latter, the French Revolution marks a new time and a new historical period: the time of revolutions. Badiou and other thinkers like Antonio Negri have admitted that the age of revolutions that was the twentieth century has become tired,¹⁵ and the call to revolution is often met with apathy or short-lived burst of energy that do not last more than a few months or weeks. We saw this with Occupy Wall Street movement, for example. So many revolutions have brought about devastating changes and have failed, which have left many people leery and tired. The age of revolutions can be expanded into a larger set and can include other events like the American, Russian, Cuban, and Haitian Revolutions as well as May '68.

For our purposes here, we need to focus on what keeps events together. In general, according to Badiou, there are two kinds of sets or groupings of multiples: those marked by belonging (*appartenance*) and those marked by inclusion (*inclusion*) (EE 95). The former refers to the wide array of multiple elements that can belong to a particular set of elements that constitute a situation, whereas the latter refer to the subsets that inextricably belong to a set of a situation. So, within an historical situation, say the French Revolution (recall that the French Revolution is not only an event but also a situation), the three Estates (i.e., clergy, nobility, common people) of the Estates-General must be included as part of the French Revolution: there is a necessity that belongs to the ordering of the subsets of inclusion, whereas with belonging there is an infinite number of multiples that can belong to a set. For example, certain laws, ideas, and people may be included in the set of the event called French Revolution, but they are not necessary in order for the French Revolution to be the event that it was. For Badiou, the event itself is held together through time and continues to be meaningful, thereby structuring politics, by virtue of an operation of fidelity on the part of subjects that keep referring back to the event and who are faithful to the singularity of the event. In the case of the French Revolution, those faithful to it will keep pushing its unique and singular ideas, its singular form of subjectivity, and its unique spirit of the times throughout future ages. The spirit of the event

of the French Revolution certainly lives in in the French Republic today and in many daily customs of the French. We can also see traces of the French Revolution in the Haitian Revolution of 1986, where Haitians ousted Duvalier after years of abuse, corruption, and violence.

For Badiou, fidelity to an event is conceived as a procedure (EE 257). He says it is the procedure by which one distinguishes within a situation the multiples whose existence is connected to an event that an intervention brought into action. Fidelity gathers and distinguishes the becoming of that which is connected to the name of the event. Fidelity is described as a kind of referential love; it is also viewed as being very particular (EE 257–258). Fidelity is not a thing; rather, one does not see it except by its results: one sees the connections and operation of fidelity in the effects of the event, especially on time and subjectivity. For example, being faithful to the principles of the American, French, Chinese, or Russian Revolutions will continue to have particular effects in real time and on subjects insofar as subjects remain faithful to the uniqueness of what these revolutions name and entail. The present-day Chinese regime still sees itself as being faithful to Mao's revolutionary principles, though it has substantially reworked Mao's view of agriculture and economics. Chinese students still receive an education rooted in Maoist principles, though some aspects of Mao's originary revolutionary insights have been reformulated because of changing historical and economic situations: other global events, for example, the rise of global capital and banking networks, have shifted the ordering of the elements that constitute the Maoist revolution.

In addition to fidelity, the singular arrangements of multiples within a given situation that form the event also have their own force.¹⁶ But, if we can only know an event in retrospective apprehension, the event has to possess its own temporality: events must have their own time that continues to perdure in order to be recognized as an event. So, though the event consists of a radically reordered set of multiples, the true test of the being of the event is through the process of fidelity.

HEGEL CONFRONTS BADIOU

In Hegel's philosophy, we find identity as a veritable moment in the life of politics. We saw the identitarian moment play itself out in the relationship between the members of the sovereign state. In his analysis of the state, Hegel articulates the development and essence of modern state sovereignty. Hegelian identity must be seen as part of a dialectical movement. Badiou *a contrario* rejects identity as a real possibility. He affirms multiplicity. The one that emerges is subtracted from the collective, but the former is never identical with the latter. Badiou beautifully describes the operation of fidelity as a kind of discernment but it is also a loving relationship (EE 257). It helps distinguish what elements in a multiplicity

genuinely belong to an event and how to make those elements licit and necessary. "Fidelity is, in sum, the *dispositif* that separates within the set of multiples that are present those elements that belong to the event. To be faithful, is to gather and distinguish the becoming legal of what is haphazard" (EE 257).

The treatment of fidelity as a loving relationship with the being of the event is problematic. Though one can certainly see what Badiou means by the singularity of an event being distinguished from the general multiplicity of a singularity, which arises through the intervention or decision of a subject, it is difficult to see how it is that we can keep coming back to the same event in time without the subject or the event acquiring different senses, which ultimately would compromise the singularity of the event. Let me unpack the foregoing claim.

Badiou describes fidelity as a return to the situation where one can also see the *ultra-un* of the event (EE 257). One returns (in thinking, speaking, doing, or through retrospective apprehension) to the event and the situation day after day (EE 257). If fidelity yields a temporal ordering of multiples that form the event, fidelity is the loving¹⁷ return to the event over and over again *through time*. We return to the event of the French Revolution and we are faithful to its principles insofar as we wish to see its principles of fraternity, equality, and liberty live on in our contemporary politics. We work hard to keep these principles operating and connected to our lives in the contemporary state. This constant and loving return to the event in retrospective apprehension and action means that somehow the event remains the same through time. But we know that Badiou argues that events can also acquire different senses as they unfurl in time, that is, more elements can be added to or subtracted from the set that forms out of the event. Sylvain Lazarus rightly points out that the French Revolution acquires different senses as historians try to make sense of the French Revolution in different epochs.¹⁸ For example, Benjamin Constant understands the French Revolution in a different way than thinkers like Robespierre or Kant. Yet, and despite the possibility of events acquiring or shifting senses, Badiou speaks of the fixity of connectedness to the event—a constant connection exists (EE 259). He also says that rules can be devised governing the nature of the event and its relation to the situation, which is achieved through fidelity (EE 259). The faithful return or *renvoie* to the event implies a sameness of the event that perdures, which suggests an identity of the event. Fidelity as an operation, process or procedure of love is a return to the same event over and over again, and though the event can grow, decline, or change its sense, it still holds the name that designates the same event. There is a moment of identification implied in Badiou's account of the event that fidelity brings to the fore, a moment of identity of returning over and over again to the same event on the part of its subjects and interveners. Granted, this identification is neither Neo-Platonic nor absolute, but it is an important re-

quirement for Badiou's analysis of political events. One can think here perhaps of Derridean iterability or *renvoie* as somehow guaranteeing the same *différance* playing itself out over and over again, although simultaneously guaranteeing a deferral and differentiation rooted in temporization and spatialization.¹⁹ But this structure does not exist in Badiou's philosophy. It seems that Badiou wishes to keep decidability and undecidability, possibility and impossibility, of multiplicities, but the faithful action of loving subjects bespeaks a constant return to the same event. Even the description of fidelity itself as a process of return never changes: it is always a loving return to the event. In other words, fidelity as an operation, which is so crucial for the event, is the identical or same kind of repetitive process of connection, of keeping elements and subjects of an event together.

Fidelity, however, is not only a loving return to a past moment made in the present that allows an event to perdure, for there is also a futural aspect that we need to consider. Fidelity contains within it the expectation that political events will persist, and so the return extends toward the future. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou argues that events produce certain affects in subjects. Political events produce enthusiasm in subjects.²⁰ Enthusiasm affects subjects insofar as it keeps subjects returning to the same object and makes them feel or live the event and its possibilities. But even in future anticipation and enthusiasm, one returns to a specific event, whose elements may have shifted and even been rearranged, but the event that gave rise to the ordering of the events is still the same, localized in time and space, for example, the French Revolution. This return to the same event, this fidelity to the event is a return to an identified and identifiable event on the part of the subject. The event retains the same identifying name as well as the ordering, though modifiable through time, that it establishes.

The advantage of Hegelian identity over Badiouan multiplicity is that the former is dialectical and momentary. Even Hegel's absolute is multiply differentiated though a self-same whole as it collects all the moments of history and consciousness into itself. Badiou's aversion to identity causes problems for his understanding of political events, especially in terms of his account of fidelity over time. If he had incorporated identity, understood as an important temporal moment of the faithful return to the same named event, into his account of political events, one could deploy it in the operation of fidelity insofar as it could account for the constant return to the same named event and the very sameness of the procedure of fidelity, which is practiced constantly and in a repetitive fashion, albeit its objects may be different, as there are different events.

Badiouan fidelity also has implications for the situation, especially in terms of nature and history. Events are inextricably linked to situations. Indeed, situations are part of any event. This means that both history and material nature are present and constitutive of events, albeit in a second-

dary fashion. If fidelity is essentially a kind of connection that bespeaks identity insofar as we lovingly perform it over and over again, and if in fidelity we constantly come back to the same event, how do we account for changes in a situation? Are we faithful to the same situation? Badiou affirms the variability and mutability of the situation right in the beginning of *Being and Event* (EE 31–39), but one wonders if the operation of fidelity somehow fixes the situation as well? I think this may well be a possibility, given Badiou's notion of fidelity as a constant return to the same event: the event will always contain more or less the same historical and material elements that it had at its origin. We cannot simply dismiss these situational elements as they are part of the event.

Hegel, by contrast, shows how history and nature preserve, transform, and complicate reality as the dialectic of consciousness unfolds. Again, Hegelian moments of identification show how nature and history leave the self-same traces of themselves, except they can also be transformed and altered as well. This is the case because Hegelian identity is cast within the dialectic of becoming. Badiou does not privilege becoming; rather, he prefers the category of being. He surreptitiously incorporates identity into his philosophy and into his account of political events, but he does not account for its possibility even though we see it in his discussion of fidelity, especially as it applies to the event and the material nature and history of the situation.

We know that political events for Badiou persist in time and space: the elements that constitute a political order may move within a set that is ordered by an event, and, hence, an event can acquire new meanings through time and new senses of subjectivity as well. We can see this growth of meaning when we investigate the history of the French or American Revolution. Recall that Lazarus shows how these senses accrue and how specific historical periods subsequent to a political event shift the sense of an event while remaining faithful to the event. For Hegel, the political event of the French Revolution, for example, is a specific temporal moment that is grounded in a particular time and place, but which has universal implications for the unfolding of reason and freedom.²¹ Hegel believed that the French Revolution inspired many ideals that could be worked through in thought within the German context of idealism, thereby avoiding the bloody consequences of the actual Terror and Revolution.²² Badiou's faithful, loving, and enthusiastic return to the same political event in the present freezes the event in time insofar as its having been is never truly annihilated. Hegel's dialectical account preserves the French Revolution as an identifiable moment in time, but it is taken up in new possibilities of thinking and social and political reality of the Prussian state. Given that Badiou does not admit identity or genuine moments of Hegelian identity into his system of thought, especially an identity that takes up both difference and identity, as does Hegel, one wonders whether one can actually return to the same event in the way that

Badiou says we can. What is to say that our own enthusiasm and understanding of fidelity does not change, given historical developments and changes? What guarantees the constancy of the event other than our own fallible enthusiasm and operations of fidelity? Perhaps a stronger account of identity, along Hegelian lines, within Badiou's ontology could give the political event a more perduring consistency that we can refer to in and across time.

A discussion of Hegelian identity as a moment of becoming (the becoming of an identity through unity and difference) may help Badiou strengthen his account of fidelity. Our fidelity to political events and our loving return to them over and over again is an operation of love, a love that contains within it aspects of the same and identical event extended through time and in subjects.

NOTES

1. Raimo Tuomela, "Acting as a Group Member," in *The Philosophy of Sociality: The Shared Point of View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13–45.

2. Margaret Gilbert, *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), and *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment and the Bonds of Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet and ed. Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Hereafter parenthetically cited as PR.

4. Adriel M. Trott, "The Truth of Politics in Alain Badiou: 'There is Only One World,'" in *Parrhesia*, vol. 12, 2011, 83.

5. Alain Badiou, *Abrégé de métapolitique* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 156–157. Hereafter parenthetically cited as AM.

6. Dieter Heinrich, "Logical Form and Real Totality: The Authentic Conceptual Form of Hegel's Concept of State," in *Hegel on Ethics and Politics*, eds. Robert Pippin and Otfried Höffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241–267.

7. Eric Weil, *Hegel and the State*, trans. Mark A. Cohen (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

8. Robert Bruce Ware, "History and Reciprocity in Hegel's Theory of the State," in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, volume 6, no. 3, 1998, 421–445.

9. Recall that the history is a process whereby the spirit discovers itself and its own concept. History also traces the unfolding of freedom through time. The state is a moment in the unfolding of freedom.

10. Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2013), 7–10.

11. Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1999).

12. *Ibid.*, 79–82.

13. Alain Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 194. Hereafter parenthetically cited as EE.

14. Antonio Calcagno, *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events and Their Time* (London: Continuum, 2007).

15. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), and Alain Badiou, *D'un désastre obscur: Sur la fin de la vérité d'État* (Paris: Aube, 1999).

16. Geoffrey Holsclaw, "At a Distance to the State: On the Politics of Hobbes and Badiou," in *Telos*, no. 160, Fall 2012, 99–119.

17. The loving return to the event in fidelity is not to be equated with the event of love. The former is an attitude or behavior of subjectivized individuals to a specific political event, whereas the latter refers to the intimate relationship of two people and the transformation of subjectivity itself through a love relationship into a truth procedure. In the loving return of fidelity, individual subjects direct themselves toward an event, whereas in the event of love, subjects focus on the specific relationship between them. See Jim Vernon's chapter in this collection for further clarification of the event of love.

18. See Antonio Calcagno, "Abolishing Time and History: Lazarus and the Possibility of Thinking Political Events Outside Time" in *Journal of French Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2007, 13–36.

19. Antonio Calcagno, "The Transcendental and Inexistence in Alain Badiou's Philosophy: A Derridean Similarity?," in *Philosophy Today* Volume 59, Issue 2 (Spring 2015), 267–268

20. Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 76.

21. David Ciavatta, "The Event of Absolute Freedom: Hegel on the French Revolution and Its Calendar", in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 40 no. 6, 577–605, July 2014.

22. Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

NINE

Taming the Furies: Badiou and Hegel on *The Eumenides*

Alberto Toscano

La politique est la fatalité.

—Napoleon to Goethe

The dialectic is a thinking of lived division, of real contradiction, not as a fact but as a process or movement. In politics, dialectical thought can only emerge in the wake of the erosion or rupture of a *pólis*, community or state, imagined as a harmonious unity—in decline, transition or strife. The “ideology of the city,”¹ though it may motivate the labor of the concept as a nostalgia to be kindled and transfigured, is incompatible with the starting point that the beautiful unity of ethical life, the organic self-reflection and self-possession of a way of life—of a *people*—is irremediably extinguished. In spite, or perhaps because of, its haunting by the death of the *pólis*, the origin of a properly dialectical politics is to be found in tragedy’s representation of the divisions repressed or disavowed in political life, divisions principally figured as those between the political and its others (the family and the archaic customs and divinities it gives body to). Inasmuch as it thinks the fissures of the political, and their manifestation in suffering subjects, as the negative motor of its unfolding, the dialectic has in tragedy a privileged source and reservoir of figures.

In a temporal irony we will revisit below, it is in the *pólis*’s confrontation with the *archaic*, with laws that precede the conscious institution of human law, that the dialectic finds the vocabulary to think the *modernity* of a subject whose negativity and restless self-division must be harnessed and shaped, but can never be eliminated. Yet, inasmuch as the absorption of tragedy and its figures of negativity into the movement of the dialectic

is also the first figure of sublation, of the cancelling and raising of unilateral differences into a dynamic, organic unity, then the dialectic (and philosophy more broadly) is built on the death of tragedy; on the weaving of finitude into a new infinity; on the *use* of negativity; on the *redemption* of suffering; on making intractable diremption into a *moment*.

Of course, inasmuch as tragedy was a lived representation, not a poetic text but a theatrical (and therefore political) reality, then it is in the supposed *catharsis* of its civic and psychological effects that the dialectic might find one of its models and precursors. The dialectic could thus also be regarded as the making objective of tragedy's native urge for reconciliation, transposed from a recurrent therapy of the citizen to a real collective and historical force. Because the politics of the dialectic draw on what Nicole Loraux calls the anti-politics of tragedy,² anti-dialectical critique can always mobilise tragedy as intractable division or unredeemed finitude against the dialectic's urge to put contradiction to work, to make negativity *productive*. Yet we may also want to overcome the contrast and contest between tragedy and the dialectic (or philosophy as such), and the advocacy for the one over the other, by dwelling on that division in the *pólis*, or in Spirit, that both tragedy and the dialectic evade or seek to contain—which is not the division between the political and its others (the state and family, in the paradigmatic case), but the division in politics itself. Both tragedy *and* the dialectic can be regarded as ways of displacing and disavowing, or containing and circumscribing, the possibility of an intractable division within politics itself, inheriting the imperative to resist, prevent, and perhaps ultimately *forget* the *stásis* (somewhat improperly glossed as “civil war”³) which, as Loraux has powerfully argued, accompanies the Ancient Greek “invention” of politics, precisely in politics' forgetting of what she evocatively terms “the fevered equilibrium of blocked situations.”⁴

That Alain Badiou is a thinker of division might not require restating. The strongest legacy of his erstwhile Maoism may indeed be the schema, drawn from *On Contradiction*, which juxtaposes a dialectic of division (and rebellious novelty) to one of fusion (and conservative reconciliation). Though “one divides into two”—which he affirms as “the only law of the dialectic”—undergoes multiple incarnations in Badiou's writing, being formalized through the Lacanian analytics of the subject as well as via the mathemes of set and category theory, its abiding presence testifies to the persistence of the dialectic in Badiou, notwithstanding the many leave-takings from the latter's Hegelian mode.

In what follows, I want to sound out the (meta)political stakes of Badiou's relation to the Hegelian dialectic precisely through the prism of tragedy, conceived as the anti-political origin of a dialectical politics. This means that the properly speculative dimensions of Badiou's relationship to Hegel—the rescinding of the very category of totality, the forging of non-Hegelian forms of infinity and negativity, the affinity and rupture in

their images of philosophy's relationship to its time—will go undressed, or only obliquely so. It also means tackling a *prima facie* objection to such an enterprise: if Badiou's status as a dialectical thinker is a contestable one, his affinity with the tragic appears extremely disputable, and this across several axes.⁵

If, as has become customary in post-Kantian philosophy, tragedy is taken primarily as a matter of finitude, then Badiou's conviction that political truth procedures begin with the infinite and are irreducible to the human animal, as well as the contemporary pathos of the victim, would appear immediately to disqualify him from partaking in the dialogue between tragedy and philosophy. The refusal to think a plurality of subjects in conflict, incommensurable truths of the same situation—a theme to which we'll return—also seems to preclude his participation in such a dialogue. What's more, the notion of tragedy as the dramatization of the contradiction between coexistent ethical orders—of state, family and individual freedom, for example—is neutralized in Badiou's indifference to the conflict between ethical or normative orders which, inasmuch as they are not part of the upsurge of a subject, are envisaged merely as different ways of regulating and reproducing a life without truth or idea.⁶ The ontological undermining of unity and totality enacted in Badiou's mature works would compound this normative indifference to drain the pathos—derived from the collective experience of the *pólis* and its conflicts—of a lost, damaged, or threatened whole. The “secularization” of the infinite which accompanies the devolution of ontology to mathematics would then bring with it the loss of the philosophical or political function of the tragic scenario, which is only tragic to the extent that division takes place in the horizon of unity and totality—which is to say in view of a possible, if refused, reconciliation. In a situation rendered to multiplicity, and thoroughly stripped of a nostalgia for the One, in which the subject is neither presupposed nor stamped with finitude, tragedy would stand revealed as the offspring of ideology, an ideology of the whole that maintains itself alive through a static representation of differences.

Though the conditions for the tragic seem to be sloughed off with Badiou's development of a materialist dialectic, Greek tragedy provides a crucial figuration of Badiou's theory of the subject, establishing a philosophical and political orientation that is arguably still active in his work today. The extraction from Aeschylus's *The Eumenides* of a figure of subjectivity, in contrast to Sophocles's *Antigone*, has a specific function in *Theory of the Subject*: to overcome the anti-political structural repetitions that Badiou associates with the Lacanian formalization of subjectivity. But it also dramatizes the link between justice and novelty which is at the core of Badiou's conception of politics. Though it is doubtful that the influence is here direct, *The Eumenides* also plays the role of a dialectical figure in a crucial essay on natural law from Hegel's Jena period. I want

to consider how these two figurations of the politics of the dialectic, mapped onto “two Greek tragic modes” (TS 165), shed light on the division between two models of division, but also how they reveal the facets of tragedy that both Hegel and Badiou leave behind, revealing what is perhaps an unexpected image of Badiou as a thinker of reconciliation, together with a refusal—common to the two dialectical thinkers and perhaps characteristic of philosophy as such—to think *division in the subject and in the political*, under the guise of *stásis* or civil war.

It needs to be noted that, like Hegel in *Natural Law*, Badiou does not approach *The Eumenides* as drama, in its relationship to its audience, or indeed its city.⁷ The tragedy is grasped as the dramatization of a particular figure of (political) division, which correlates, in Badiou, to a particular *theory of the subject*. In this way, though by no means as extensive as an exploration of a model of subjectivity, Aeschylus’s tragedy plays an analogous role to that of Saint Paul’s epistles in Badiou’s later work (it too is a “foundation of universalism”). Parenthetically, we could note that both figurations of truth-processes are originally predicated on the unity of divinity, that of the resurrected Jesus for Paul and of Athena’s decisive vote for Aeschylus: truth does indeed have the structure of a fiction.

As Bruno Bosteels has elegantly explored, the Aeschylus/Sophocles differend mediates the integration of and separation from Lacan’s theory of the subject, whose Sophoclean fixation is presented as testament to its inability, in the final analysis, to think justice and novelty, that is, to think *politics*. Though my concern here is not with psychoanalysis, the terms of Badiou’s engagement with its tragic lesson are pertinent. In its culmination in *Antigone* (not coincidentally the key tragic work in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, in which it also appears as the supreme work of art), tragedy bequeaths to psychoanalysis the vision of a subject structurally oscillating between “Antigone” and “Creon,” personae who “name the respective figures of anxiety and the superego, that is, the formlessness of what persists without legal place and the surfeit of form that restores the law as terror.”⁸

The Eumenides supplement and displace these two figures, which together make up the subject of psychoanalysis, with those of courage and justice, Orestes and Athena. These two figures are produced by a kind of internal division of the first two. Courage, like anxiety, is a relation to the disorder effected by the excess of the real over the symbolic. Badiou’s formulation is telling: courage is “identical to anxiety [. . .] but as a disruptive force [. . .] it functions as its inversion” (TS 160). The question is: how do we relate to a deficit in the symbolic? By demanding the end of disruption and the assertion of the symbolic law, or by assuming this disorder and transmuting it into novelty? Courage, which qualifies the subjective process (it is not a virtue of an individuated subject, so that “Orestes” is here but an allegory, perhaps ultimately of the communist party), “turns the radical absence of any security into its force” (TS 160).

This is unashamedly an Aeschylus *after* capital's dissolution of all substantial bonds, *after* nihilism, both active and passive.⁹ Justice too is a division internal to the matter of the superego, which is law. Against the interpretation, which could be gleaned from Hegel himself, which sees Creon/superego as the hubristic assertion of the rational rights of the state, Badiou's Lacan-inflected take on the law emphasizes its obscene underside, its founding violence, what, in a striking turn of phrase, Badiou terms "the ferocious archaism of the fixity of the law" (TS 159). The fact that this could all the more be ascribed to Antigone simply testifies to Badiou's affinity to the Hegelian lesson that these figures of tragedy are reciprocally implicated, entangled, notwithstanding the appearance of their incommensurability.

Justice is not just a division of the law; it is, like courage, a particular experience of and relationship to division. Breaking with the superego's "repetitive fabric of obsession," the justice figured in Aeschylus as Athena "requires a dialectical precariousness of the law, susceptible of being shaken up in the process of its scission" (TS 159). Where the superego that drives the state asserts the exclusive superpower of the law, and in so doing makes it identical to *nonlaw* (the total reign of legality being indistinguishable from illegality), justice names the possibility that what is nonlaw may become law. What is divided here is not just law, between the archaic and the law that will have been, but nonlaw itself—between, on the one hand, the sheer violence underlying the exercise of state law and, on the other, the possibility that what is now excluded, written out of the law, may be transmuted into its basis. In this passage through tragedy and psychoanalysis, communism is rethought as just such a division of the law: "Communism, as the sole modern theory of revolution, effectuates the partisan subjectivity of the universal principle of justice, that is, the nonlaw as law" (TS 159).¹⁰

But Badiou is not only proposing a transcoding and transcending of the psychoanalytic penchant for a tragic (Sophoclean) theory of the subject. He is also articulating a *theory of tragedy* (or rather of tragedy's philosophical effects, what we may term an *inaesthetics and metapolitics of tragedy*). This is done by way of a schematic engagement with the most significant source, alongside Schelling, of Hegel's own speculations on tragedy: Hölderlin. In Badiou's reading of Hölderlin the tragic contradiction is the one between an originary "native" One, which is identified with the "Asiatic" and "orgiastic," and a regulated Whole marked by finitude and representative closure, or "native form." Badiou isolates the unthought or suppressed catalyst of this contradiction in the German poet's reading of *Antigone*: the *insurrection* of Polynices, which is not contained but instead infects the whole *pólis* through the break in the beautiful finitude of "native form"—in the shape of Creon's assertion of unlimited jurisdiction, played out on the abject unburied body of the rebel—which in turn draws out its suppressed counterpart: "In reaction to this excess of form,

the latent formlessness in its turn is set ablaze and calls upon the infinity of the sky against the finite law of the polis (*Antigone*)" (TS 162).

Tragic "reversal" takes the form of the antagonism between the super-egoic law of the state, "deregulated—destroyed—by its very own native essence" and *Antigone's* "anxiety," "the principle of the infinity of the real" (TS 162). The impossibility for insurrection—the interruption of the order of the city—to issue into a *new order*, leaves us with the deadlocked spectacle of the antagonism between form and formlessness, which together make up the "One of reversal," with the unthought rebel as an "absent cause." Badiou's proposal is here as unorthodox as it is ingenious: what motivates the tragic antagonism is not (only) the confrontation of two orders of justice making unlimited claims without a synthesizing Third; it is the refusal to articulate the irruption of revolt into the *pólis*. Because the Sophoclean (but also Hölderlinian and Lacanian) tragic contradiction, as Badiou puts it, is not governed by any "new right," it cannot but issue into *death*, or, in psychoanalytic terms, into the overpowering of the symbolic at the hands of the real. Badiou further historicizes, albeit in an extremely schematic way, this contradiction-reversal (and ultimate unity) of anxiety and superego, as a product of "times of decadence and disarray, both in history and in life" (TS 163).

The largely neglected path of Aeschylus then is that which allows rupture to traverse and divide contradiction itself. It does so by posing the problem: what new law will be born of revolt? Athena's "ex-centric" decree signals for Badiou the possibility of a justice that cannot be equated with the reassertion of law, but is rather the outcome, through the irruption of a nonlaw of revolt, of a division in the law, a division which is the condition of novelty. *The Eumenides* thus models the possibility of "the advent of a new right, capable of completely recomposing the whole logic of the decision" (TS 164). The dialectical irony is that the play which has been taken to figure the apex of ethical contradiction, *Antigone*, stands revealed as a figure of the One, while the tragedy that dramatizes the (re)unification of the *pólis* has become the testing ground for a thinking of division. Critical to this issue, which we will revisit presently in counterpoint to Hegel's own use of *The Eumenides*, is the way in which Aeschylus's resolution of contradiction is based on assuming the event of insurrection, the "institutive disruption" (TS 166) of Orestes's challenge to the divine nomos.

This tragedy of foundation, unlike *Antigone's* tragedy of impasse, is driven not by the "formal excess" of a law that reveals its grounding illegality in its pretence to totality (what the Badiou of *Ethics* will term *terror*), but by the "courageous refusal" that forces the recomposition of law by way of the nonlaw of revolt. The supervening articulation of courage and justice over superego and anxiety—to employ the psychoanalytic lexicon here preferred by Badiou—allows tragedy to circumvent the dominion of death over "reversal," and thus truly to become political,

not as the tragedy of the impossibility of revolt but as that of the revolt against impossibility, against the “structural part of the theory of the subject” (TS 166). In Badiou’s words: “In a tragedy by Aeschylus, the dynamic course of insurrection, as Hölderlin would say, does not coincide with the propagation of death. It is what founds justice through the internal division and withering of the old right. Far from being tied to the exclusion of the absent cause, the rebel—Orestes or Prometheus—is the immediate agent of this dynamic course” (TS 166).

Rebellion is the rebellion against the origin, the institution of a tragic time which is not that of repetition, or of the “retrogression toward the origin in its double aspect: the formal excess and the fire of the formless” (TS 167)—which for Badiou characterizes the Sophoclean, Hölderlinian and Lacanian conceptions of the tragic. Against this, the Aeschylusian mode of the tragic dramatizes a key tenet of Badiou’s dialectic: “the interruption of the power of the origin, the division of the One” (TS, 167). Tragic reversal is thereby divided in its turn: the reversal associated with anxiety and the Hölderlinian native, with its doomed effort to cure anxiety by way of the face-off between “the terror of restoration” (Creon) and “mystical stupor” (Antigone), is displaced by what Badiou calls “the reversal of exile [. . .] in which it is from the denegation and scission of the old law that stems the illumination, in the guise of the new, of the torsion inflicted upon the real. The reversal of exile revokes the original in its scant reality, while restoring the real in justice” (TS 167–68). Stressing the dialectic of destruction that will be the object of self-criticism in *The Century* (one of the critical texts for Badiou’s *political* dialogue with Hegel), Badiou interprets this reversal through a lapidary watchword: “let us make a tabula rasa of the past” (TS 168). Courage is “exile without return, loss of one’s name”—though courage does not exhaust the subject: “Even though we have to return—and it is this return that makes the subject—there can arise an enlightened overcoming of what no longer entails any return” (TS 168).

These, the final words of this seminar of May 9, 1977, on the theory of the subject according to Sophocles and Aeschylus, could reasonably define Hegel’s overcoming of the nostalgia towards the Greek *pólis* and *ethos*, and indeed the overtaking of tragedy by the dialectic. Though arguably tragedy’s own self-overcoming of the deadlock of contradiction in *The Eumenides* could provide a figure for Hegel’s philosophy as a whole, Hegel’s own engagement with Aeschylus *precedes* his crucial incorporation of the *Antigone* into the movement of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In his 1802–1803 essay on natural law, the attention to the tragic embodies the challenge to the emptiness of (Kantian and Fichtean) formalism and the arbitrariness of empiricism, the two schools of thought whose dialectical dismantling takes up the bulk of the text. *Natural Law* (like *Theory of the Subject*) is an immensely rich and complex text—here I simply wish to isolate those elements of Hegel’s articulation of Aeschylus’s tragedy

which shed some contrasting light on Badiou's own attempt to think the politics of tragedy. These interlinked elements are: the immanence of tragedy to the absolute and ethical life; the relation between tragedy and capitalism; the place of the Furies/Eumenides; and the question of reconciliation.

Against the merely external negativity that characterizes legal formalism and empiricism alike—with their undialectical conjoining of the one and the whole, morality and legality, individual and state—the tragic figures for Hegel the possibility of a living contradiction as the very stuff of ethical life. In this regard, tragedy is not an extrinsic representation of ethical life (or, at a higher speculative level, of the Absolute), it traverses ethical life itself, nullifying the abstract dualisms that the legal-philosophical thinking of his contemporaries made patent. Unity in division, in suffering and sacrifice, is what characterizes what we could call (in a Christian rather than pagan mode) the passion of the Absolute. It is in facing the *inorganic*, and conceding its (relative) rights, that the reconciliation of contradictions is made possible.

Unlike the moral and legal philosophies of his time, whose articulation and unification of modern society is ultimately extrinsic, Hegel strives towards a thinking of the ethical (to be understood as the "indifference" of the legal, the moral, the social, and the political) in which the rights of "subterranean powers" are conceded, in what Hegel terms "facing and objectifying the involvement with the inorganic."¹¹ The bond between tragedy and philosophy itself could not be more forcefully stated than in Hegel's crucial contention that the simultaneous recognition and "cleansing" of the "right of the inorganic" is "nothing else but the performance, on the ethical plane, of the tragedy which the Absolute eternally enacts with itself, by eternally giving birth to itself into objectivity, submitting in this objective form to suffering and death, and rising from its ashes into glory."¹²

Being is division, and *both* contradiction and reconciliation are recurrent processes, never saturated once and for all. Of course, contrary to Badiou's forcing of the dialectic, the law of division is not itself divided, and thus the sacrifice is something like a third figure between return and exile—a kind of creative return. It could also be argued that taking up tragedy into the realm of the ethical, and into the Absolute itself, preemptively neutralizes the radicality of the contradiction, along with any novelty that may be wrenched from it. In *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou declares that "Dialectics states that there is the Two, and intends to infer the One from it as a moving division. Metaphysics posits the One, and forever gets tangled up in deriving from it the Two" (TS 22). Framed thus, the Hegel of *Natural Law* has not left metaphysics behind, and sacrifice is not a division that can go beyond repetition into novelty.

In what sense does Hegel see tragedy as the site of reconciliation, understood as the recognition and subordination of the "rights of the

inorganic?" Precisely in the sense that he gleans from *The Eumenides*, conceived of as the site of a "litigation" (Badiou too stresses the juridical dimension of tragedy, its character as a "dispute"), which pits the Erinyes, conceived as "powers of law in the sphere of difference," and Apollo¹³ against Orestes before the people of Athens, assembled as the Areopagus.¹⁴ Athena herself is conceived of the city in its divine mode. While the split votes of the city index for Hegel a recognition of the co-existence of the claims of the litigants, Athena introduces an asymmetry by restoring Orestes to the people of Athens, thus sublating both his difference and that of the Furies—differences which, while they remained in one-sidedness, could only be *criminal*, in the sense outlined by Kojève with regard to the role of Antigone in the *Phenomenology*: "In the pagan world this conflict is inevitable and has no solution: Man cannot renounce his Family since he cannot renounce the Particularity of his Being; nor can he renounce the State, since he cannot renounce the universality of his Action. And thus he is always and necessarily *criminal*, either toward the State or toward the Family. And this is what constitutes the tragic character of pagan life."¹⁵ In the loaded vocabulary of constitutional liberalism, Hegel interprets this act of Athena as a separation of powers, which is also to say a containment of the powers of the Furies, and their transmutation into the Eumenides, the Kindly Ones.

Within a shared intent to think the dialectic through tragedy, the differences are extremely instructive. Despite Badiou's contention that *The Eumenides* integrates the four dimensions of the subject—so that the Furies are not just as the divinities of revenge, but as the coupling of anxiety and superego in the *unlimitation* of the old laws—it is the *abolition* and not the *sublation* of the past which dominates his account (not least in never referring to the title of the play but only to that of the trilogy, *Oresteia*). The process of interruption-foundation that takes the names of Orestes and Athena thus overwhelms what is the very focus of Hegel's interpretation of Aeschylus's play, namely what is to be done with the inorganic, with that subterranean difference that resists rational integration. Unity through differentiation is the key to Hegel's conception of the tragic, for which the transformative inclusion of the Furies within the *pólis*, and their transmutation into benevolent divinities of the city, serves as a crucial allegory of the very relationship of dialectical thought to the seemingly irrational. This is evident in the definition in *Natural Law* of tragedy as stemming from the fact "that ethical nature segregates its inorganic nature (in order not to become embroiled in it), as a fate, and places it outside itself; and by acknowledging this fate in the struggle against it, ethical nature is reconciled with the Divine being as the unity of both."¹⁶ Needless to say, from a Badiouian standpoint, this would be both metaphysical and, despite Hegel's ultimate intentions, liberal. But there is a perhaps less evident, if more instructive difference at stake.

As the pages leading up to the discussion of *The Eumenides* evince, and as Lukács acutely explored in the chapter on “tragedy in the realm of ethical” in *The Young Hegel*¹⁷ (itself written amid the “furies” of Stalinism), the problem of the inorganic for Hegel is the problem of whether ethical life is possible in capitalism. In a startling short circuit, the rage of the Furies allegorizes the “nullity” of the bourgeois and the anarchy of market transactions. It is as though Hegel were seeking to think how a way of life founded on the apparent *absence* of fate, capitalism, could be assumed and segregated in its *sui generis* necessity, in the persuasion—key to the young Lukács, the one of *Soul and Form* and *Theory of the Novel*—that a return to the *pólis* and its absolute ethical life is impossible (and that, now in a diachronic rather than allegorical mode, it was doomed to demise by the very normative contradictions that Greek tragedies mapped so memorably).

This granting of a relative autonomy to the “lower world” of capitalism could be seen as an ideological mystification (which it surely is in part), but it could also be viewed, following Lukács, as a testament to Hegel’s attention to the tragic character of capitalist modernity, of irremediable contradictions that can also serve as the foothold for an immanent critique of the very ideology of reconciliation itself. The fact that Hegel’s concern here is not the subject of politics as such but the possibility of an ethical life that encompasses and transcends the political is critical: where Badiou’s *Theory of the Subject* seeks to make tabula rasa, in more than one way, of capitalism, Hegel’s *Natural Law* strives to embed the furies of the market. Though the ideological price to be paid for this is high, it does allow the purview of the tragic to be extended beyond the streamlined sequence of insurrection and foundation, and into the very fabric of social life itself. It is this expanded notion of the tragic, spanning the social, the political and the ethical, which will make possible the conceptions of modern revolutionary tragedy in the likes of Sartre, Williams, and CLR James, among others.¹⁸

Badiou’s discussion of the Aeschylus/Sophocles differend carries a crucial statement: “The possible modernity of the tragic is a political question—as a question for the theory of the subject” (TS 163). This remains a vital program of research. While for Hegel the modernity of tragedy is to be sought in its figuration of the contradictions of a social world—contradictions that are ironically founded on the impossibility of tragedy itself (this is what transpires from the improbable allegorizing of the bourgeois “inorganic” by the Erinyes)—in Badiou the modernity involves, through the negated mediation of psychoanalysis, a recoding of *The Eumenides* as a tragedy of the symbolization of revolt, the becoming-law of the nonlaw in the wake of an institutive disruption (or event). The precondition for this kind of modernity is the inattention to the transmutation of the Furies into Eumenides (arguably the core of Hegel’s tragedy in the realm of the ethical) as well as the anachronistic presentation of

Orestes's murder of his mother as an *insurrection*. Notwithstanding this marked break with the Hegelian framing of Aeschylus's tragedy, the very choice of *The Eumenides* suggests that the sequence of sacrifice and reconciliation in Hegel and that of destruction and re-composition in Badiou may have deep, disavowed affinities: the *Oresteia* ends in a re-foundation of the city, in a mode that signals the founding affinity between philosophy and a certain image (or even ideology) of the city, one that Badiou's divisive dialectic perhaps hasn't fully left behind. We may recall here a remark in Loraux about the "Aeschylan certainty that discourse (*logos*) will inevitably be victorious."¹⁹ Re-composition is, from this vantage, a reconciliation in what divides, or a division within reconciliation.²⁰

A certain solidarity between these two dialectical framings of *The Eumenides* can also be registered by thinking what they leave behind—be it by way of acknowledgment or neglect—in the tragic, its Aeschylan form included. Taking our cue from Loraux's anti-political reading of tragedy, we can note that the centrality to the tragic of mourning—as an irreducible stance of the subject, and not a mere ethical position whose rights need to be recognized—waned or vanishes in its dialectic framings. In both Hegel and Badiou, and for the latter affirmatively so, the city, that is to say *politics*, is a practice of forgetting—though *Theory of the Subject* could certainly not be accused of consenting to the "ideology of the city," considered in terms of the image of a continuity without rupture, the fictive construction of an identity from the uneven times of historical processes.²¹ Badiou's interruption is still aligned to a temporal vector—not that of a teleology but that of a transformative process—and the *anti-time* of tragic vengeance is explicitly rescinded (in Loraux, this is the time of *Electra*, conceived as an *Oresteia without* the resolution of the Furies into the Eumenides). This reminder of the anti-political character of tragedy, especially in its guise of feminine revenge, could open onto another politics, that of the *return* of the Furies, or it could suggest the unstable coexistence, in this genre of and in conflict, in the *form* of tragedy, of a politics which prescribes forgetting and a mourning which revives memory—as Loraux herself suggests in *The Mourning Voice*.

But Loraux's own reflection on *The Eumenides* and civil war also suggest another line, not of criticism, but of division: in both Hegel and Badiou the philosophical and political subject of division is itself ultimately undivided, in the precise sense that both thinkers could be seen to elide civil war and the traces it leaves on the foundations of the city. Are the Furies really pacified? In becoming kindly, Loraux suggests, they have only externalized the strife that tore the *pólis* asunder, as is signified by the persistence of an affect that goes curiously unthought (which is not to say unmentioned) in these thinkers of the negative: *hatred*. Hatred is here the subjective price of a unity-in-division which constantly seeks to transform civil war (*stásis*) into war proper (*pólemos*), to purge it by externalizing it, leaving the subject in the final analysis as one. *Theory of the*

Subject bears the trace of this forgetting of civil war in Badiou's decision to refuse subjectivity to the bourgeoisie.²²

Truth may be partisan, but it is not itself divided, contested. The power of Badiou's formalization of justice and courage in tragedy is achieved at a cost, which is that of thinking the inner division of the subject of truth, the civil war that has haunted the subject(s) of communism. Badiou's recoding of Polynices and Orestes as rebels is premature, and we may yet have to tarry with the birth of tragedy, both ancient *and* modern, out of the experience of strife and civil war.

NOTES

1. See Diego Lanza e Mario Vegetti, "L'ideologia della città," *Quaderni di storia I* (1975), 1–37. Nicole Loraux adopts this term in *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*, trans. C. Pache with J. Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2006).

2. See Nicole Loraux, *The Mourning Voice: An Essay on Greek Tragedy*, trans. E. Trapnell Rawlings (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

3. On some of the differences between Greek *stásis* and Roman *bellum civile*, see Nicole Loraux, *La tragédie d'Athènes: La politique entre l'ombre et l'utopie* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 52–3.

4. *La tragédie d'Athènes*, 50. See also Loraux's major study of the question of the constitutive role of this forgetting for the Greek idea of politics, *The Divided City*.

5. Any attempt at a more comprehensive engagement with the theme of Badiou and the tragic would no doubt need to tackle his reading of Pascal—the first in Badiou's quartet of great French dialecticians (alongside Rousseau, Mallarmé, and Lacan), and the protagonist of one of the crucial Marxist returns to tragedy of the postwar period, Lucien Goldmann's *The Hidden God*. Thanks to Jason E. Smith for bringing this point to my attention, and for a number of other astute suggestions in response to an earlier draft.

6. See Badiou's *Ethics* for the most trenchant statement of this position.

7. "It goes without saying that Sophocles and Aeschylus here serve as signifiers, or even as concepts, and not as names or as literary works. It is true that they are texts, but these are meant for the theatre, which changes everything" (TS 161).

8. Bruno Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 91. Consider also this dense, evocative definition by Badiou, taken from a host of variations which pepper *Theory of the Subject*: "Anxiety is that excess-of-the-real (excess of force) over what can be symbolized (placed) thereof in a certain order, from whence a subject emerges already divided, crushed from its birth by its own truth, whose saying, under the rule of lack, comes itself to lack" (TS 155).

9. On Badiou's thinking of capitalism, see my "From the State to the World? Badiou and Anti-Capitalism," *Communication & Cognition* 3–4 (2004), 199–224.

10. See also Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*.

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Natural Law*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 104.

12. *Ibid.* See also Bernard Bourgeois, *Le droit naturel de Hegel (1802–1803): Commentaire* (Paris: Vrin, 1986), 458, and Martin Thibodeau, *Hegel et la tragédie grecque* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 77; 115.

13. Tellingly, Apollo is not a figure of the subjective dialectic in Badiou, who arguably simplifies the contradictions at stake in order the better to bring into relief Orestes's "insurrection" and its re-composition into a new justice.

14. Marking the distance travelled from *Natural Law*, §461 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* will speak of justice in terms of the way in which the individual himself becomes a "power of the underworld" and his Furies take vengeance.

15. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. A. Bloom, trans. J. H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 61–2.

16. Hegel, 105.

17. Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations Between Dialectics and Economics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1975).

18. See my “Politics in a Tragic Key,” *Radical Philosophy* 180 (June/July 2013), 25–35.

19. *La tragédie d’Athènes*, 83. Loraux’s reflections on the question of “seditious courage” in Greek thinking (86) about *stásis* is also pertinent to Badiou’s formalisation of the Oresteia. See also her reflection on *stásis* and revolution in the work of Santo Mazzarino in *Ibid.*, 161–71.

20. Loraux notes that Greek civic discourse on civil war—haunted and fascinated by the Two, as she puts it—treats reconciliation with a verb, *dialúo* (to unbind or undo), which makes reconciliation into what undoes an undoing. She asks: “Have we reflected enough on the fact that in this way of designating reconciliation, there is something like the avowal of the infinitely binding character of *stásis*?” *La tragédie d’Athènes*, 136.

21. See Loraux, *The Mourning Voice*.

22. See my “The Bourgeois and the Islamist, or, The Other Subjects of Politics,” *Cosmos & History* 2:1–2 (2006), 15–38.

Looking Forward with Hegel and Badiou . . . A Brief Conclusion

Antonio Calcagno

The essays gathered here in this volume attest to the rich and insightful but contested relationship between G. W. F. Hegel and Alain Badiou. Though Badiou claims that the philosophy of Hegel is no longer a viable tool with which to think the possibilities of infinity, the one, the event, history, art, and so on, the French thinker keeps returning to Hegel in order to help him clarify his own conceptual apparatus. Indeed, some of the essays in our collection argue that Badiou does not merely draw upon Hegel, but his own philosophy is dependent upon key Hegelian insights, despite Badiou's own protests. Bringing both philosophers together into dialogue has not only allowed us to deepen our understanding of Badiou's relationship with Hegel, but we also have gained insight into the meaning of Hegel's legacy in our times. Also important are the philosophical implications of the encounter between the two thinkers.

One of the central themes that has emerged in the book focuses on the nature and possibility of a genuine infinity. Hegel's distinction between genuine and bad infinity finds echoes in our contemporary understanding of the countable and non-denumerable infinities of the mathematician Georg Cantor, concepts that are foundational for Badiou's use of set theory. In making the distinctions they do about infinity, both philosophers reveal a genuine limit to human thinking, a limit that must be negotiated by both of them. If anything, bad infinity and countable and non-denumerable infinities reveal that our own philosophical logics, especially when it comes to our metaphysical and/or epistemological claims about truth, absoluteness, veridicality, and certainty are not always as tight or as rigorous as we are want to think. Infinity, in both Hegel's and Badiou's understandings, implies that the reality we comprehend and grasp through retrospective apprehension or through the dialectic of history is still unfinished. Hence, how we arrange our knowledge, how we organize it, and, therefore, how we understand the being of our reality, these are all subject to revision or error. The reworking of infinity allows Hegel to justify the force of becoming, and it permits Badiou to organize and reorganize the sets which being helps situate and count. Badiou and Hegel urge us to be mindful of our language and

concepts, urging us to recognize the determining and delimiting power of our own mind as it faces being and reality that are unfinished and infinitely complex.

Though Hegel has no theory of the event proper, his philosophy, especially the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and his writings on history, contains explicit and sustained meditations on key events in the history of thinking and civilization. The events of mathematics/science, art/poetry, politics, and love—all themes discussed in this volume—permit Badiou to account for significant change within human history, shifts that are huge in both impact and scope. Like Hegel, Badiou argues that there are certain key moments that define human subjects, for example, the French Revolution. Though Badiou admits no teleology in his account of events, unlike Hegel, both philosophers offer us a challenge: how to think our evolution, change, as historically situated and material beings. The advent of change does not happen as the inevitable process of fate, as the Greeks thought, or as the marching toward the *eschaton*, as the Christian medieval philosophers thought; rather, change happens because of the willed and reasoned interventions of human beings, who dwell in a specific historical time and place, who are subject to material and historical circumstances. On one hand, human beings are subject to the force of events, yet, on the other hand, they are, at the same time, freely able to bring about such events, albeit both philosophers differ on how exactly this happens. The philosopher Todd May in his recent book *Friendship in an Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism*,¹ argues that Neoliberalism has deeply structured who we are and how we view the world. The radical sense of individuality it inculcates has both deleterious and advantageous effects. In a time where the forces of Neoliberal financial policy and praxis have reduced many to feeling impotent regarding the possibility of change, Hegel and Badiou remind us that change is not only possible through subjective free acts, but they also remind us that in order to bring about huge paradigm shifts, including the ascent, rule, order, and even eventual collapse of Neoliberalism, we require life-altering events. Both Hegel and Badiou give us tools to think how this might happen. What they leave open is an account of the very possibility of change itself. They remind us that the event and rule of Neoliberalism is a regime of our own creation. All events are extensions of our own freedom, and the feeling of impasse or inevitability that dominates our present-day psyche need not be so fatalistic. Both Hegel and Badiou open up possibility by showing the very limits and structure of events in time and space. They offer us an account of the difference between mere changes and real eventual shifts, between mere individuals and genuine subjects—accounts grounded in collective action.

Another important point of discussion in the essays gathered here is the role of the dialectic in both Hegel and Badiou. We know, as many of the contributors remind us, of Badiou's weariness of Hegelian dialectic,

its teleology, and rationality. But our contributors also remind us that the dialectic is an important tool for Badiou, for it helps him think how it is possible that we can keep returning faithfully to the same event counted as one, the ultra one, without falling prey to the rationalization of Hegelian retrospective apprehension. Mathematics is Badiou's privileged tool here, as it permits him to break free of the unfolding of freedom and reason of Hegel's dialectic. Given what history has shown us after Hegel, can we read the dialectic in the way Hegel understands it? Must we abandon it? Badiou can be seen to draw inspiration from the dialectic in one fundamental way: human beings need to make sense and understand their worlds and they require different conceptual apparatuses to do so. This need is not simply the intellectual curiosity of philosophers, historians, or social scientists. Real consequences flow from the way we understand our world as they impact who we are and how we live. The dialectic orders and helps us understand how we have come to where we are. It is a story much like the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a story. Though Badiou rejects the specific structure and unfolding of the Hegelian dialectic, he accepts what belies it, namely, the need to make sense of where we have come from and what has happened in order to live in the present and make possible a future. Both thinkers challenge philosophy to explain the sense of where we are, not simply as a collection of facts about specific things in the world, but on a larger scale, how to make sense of the whole that has unfolded up until this point in time, a whole that we dwell in today. Human beings, across cultures and times, have always faced this challenge and necessity. Whether it be through the logic of events or the dialectic, looking backward in order to see what we have become or what we could become is a necessary task for any culture or group. Badiou and Hegel, as evidenced by the various essays in this book, bring to the fore of thinking this more global sense of the whole in which we find ourselves, this complex ordering of peoples and things we call reality. Whether we agree or disagree with Hegel or Badiou on how to make larger sense of who and what we are, the constant challenge of understanding ourselves in larger contexts and frameworks remains.

What the logics of the dialectic and the event reveal is not only the need to think larger wholes, but also the need to think how it is that we organize and order relations between ones and multitudes. Much of contemporary philosophy, be it in the works of Antonio Negri, Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, just to name a few, resists or flatly refuses to admit the one, unity or identity as a viable category of contemporary philosophical thinking, especially given the abuse of the concept in the violent legacies of the two world wars. Yet, how do we account for the fact that people do form units, that they dwell in solidarity, or that they do collectively act to bring about certain events and ideas? Hegel has often been accused of giving us a totalizing view of identity, unity, and oneness, but some of the thinkers in this volume have

shown that Hegelian unity requires differentiation for it to become one. By bringing Hegel and Badiou together in this collection, the authors raise once again the problem of unity: how can unities or identities be possible without lapsing into identitarian or totalitarian thinking or politics? Much of Western philosophy has been predicated on the search for the one. We are taught to think in terms of ones and unities: we seek synthesized, unified conclusions and unified, justified accounts. Both Hegel and Badiou can teach us how to resist such absolutizing views of unity or identity, without negating the fact that we do dwell and need social and political unities in order to live together. Badiou in and through a dialogue with Hegel presents a possibility of rethinking the one or unity, which our authors have presented for our readers' reflection and consideration.

The interaction and discussion that the authors in this collection have tried to instill between Hegel and Badiou is not only a reassessment of what has been done or written by both philosophers. It is also a looking back in the sense that we are trying to make sense of the thought of two notable philosophers who have much in common, but who are markedly different from one another. This volume, however, also looks forward. The dialogue between Hegel and Badiou raises questions and challenges for contemporary thinking: How do we think and speak about an unfinished or infinite reality? What are the limits to our thinking and speaking? How do we make sense of the larger reality we dwell in and help create? What tools can we access and even create? What tools and concepts do we need to leave behind? Finally, how do we account for unity in an age so weary to readmit the concept, especially after its use and abuse in establishing and fortifying the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century? Finally, as we sit on the threshold of the global entrenchment of the new regime of Neoliberal, financial capitalism, what can be deployed in Hegel and Badiou to combat the imminent arrival of a new subject and a new time? These questions, and we hope many more, will emerge as vital and central for any future philosophical thinking.

NOTES

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